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History of Palo Alto County Iowa

BY

DWIGHT G. McCARTY

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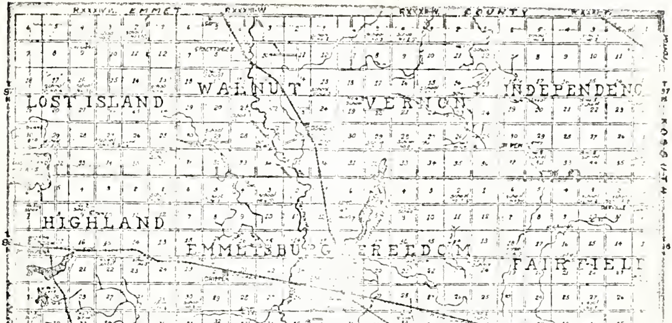
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WEST BEND
POCAHONTAS COUNTY
KOSSUTH COUNTY

Map of Palo Alto County, Iowa

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TO MY FATHER AND MOTHER WHOSE SELF-SACRIFICE AND LOVING ENCOURAGEMENT HAVE BEEN THE INSPIRATION FOR THE BEST IN LIFE THIS VOLUME IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED

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PREFACE

At the time of the celebration of the Semi-Centennial of Palo Alto County, at Emmetsburg, Iowa, in July, 1906, I was asked to prepare a short history and list of old settlers for the souvenir program distributed by the committee. The preparation of that sketch led me deep into the beginnings of the county, and the interest then incited has continued to grow as the researches progressed. Moreover, there has been a deepening consciousness that it is our sacred duty to preserve by historical record the events and traditions of the past. The intrepid pioneers who fought the battles of the frontier in the early days are fast passing away and with them the precious storehouse of human acts and achievements so vital to any history. We cannot longer delay giving justice to whom justice is due and preserve for posterity the record of those who in the vanguard of progress made possible what we now enjoy.

During the four years that have elapsed since beginning this work, I have used many spare moments and much of my vacation time in preparing this history. The gathering of material has entailed a larger amount of hard work and patient research than at first contemplated; and the writing and publication of the book has been compressed into a few months and crowded to completion for fear that the constantly increasing distractions of a busy practice might soon prevent any further work upon it before its consummation. No one is more aware of the imperfections of the book than the author and it is too much to hope that there are no inaccuracies. But it has been my purpose to give as completely and accurately as possible the history of our county. I have tried to be fair

and impartial. No labor has been spared to make the facts thoroughly trustworthy and reliable in every detail. References and explanations in footnotes have been given whenever practicable. But throughout it all the aim has been to keep the thread of human interest, the personal touch that makes life worth living and history worth reading.

The big 1906 Semi-Centennial celebration, lasting three days, bringing together as it did the old settlers and renewing forgotten associations, brought to light many valuable reminiscences and stories of the early days. An autograph register of all visitors, with the date of coming to the county, was a feature of the Old Settlers' Day and has since been permanently bound, together with the account of the proceedings and other historical matter, and forms a valuable record for future reference. Yet it is a lamentable fact that much valuable historical material has been lost and destroyed. The most careful search and extensive inquiry among the old settlers has not revealed a single copy of the old *Democrat*, published at Soda Bar in 1869, nor of the *Palo Alto Advance*, published in the Old Town in 1870, nor of the *Palo Alto Patriot*, published in 1873, nor of the *Enterprise*, issued for a short period about the same time. A partial file and one or two odd copies of the *Pilot*, published in 1874, have come to light. Complete files of the *Reporter* and the later papers have been rescued from oblivion in old cellars, barns and attics. I have tried in vain to find a copy of J. L. Martin's sketch of early county history, published many years ago; and even the manuscript of that little book is now lost. We have waited until too late to begin the preservation of the valuable records of the early days. In fact in a very few years there would have been no survivors of the first days left to tell the romantic tales now recorded in these pages.

In writing this book, I have relied much upon public

records, documents, letters, diaries, newspapers, books, printed reminiscences, and other sources of this kind. But while this has formed the framework, the real body of the narrative has come from the old settlers themselves. Many of them have very courteously written letters and statements of their recollections, and others have told me many interesting facts and incidents of the early days. Often I have had long interviews with them, while our talk was taken verbatim in shorthand and transcribed for later use and permanent record. It is in this way that the history has developed.

I am deeply grateful for the helpful co-operation of the large number who have assisted me. Without the aid of many friends among the old settlers, my work would have been in vain. It is my one regret that I have not been able to talk to more of these rugged veterans of an early day.

It is impossible to express in detail my deep obligations to the many who have so generously assisted me in this work, and I must refer to the footnotes for more special acknowledgment.

"In all that is good Iowa affords the best." We are proud of the rich, fertile, progressive county of Palo Alto — the very best in a grand state. And if this little book shall increase our love and contentment here at home, and at the same time perpetuate the memory and worthy achievements of our illustrious pioneers, it shall have accomplished its intended mission and perhaps be worthy of a place in the archives of our country.

CHAPTER I

Introduction — Westward!

The "Westward Movement" is one of the most important facts in American history. Starting with a little fringe of colonies along the Atlantic coast, the settlements began to spread gradually westward, ever westward, toward the setting sun. The dangers and hardships of pioneer life on the eastern coast were met and overcome in each successive stage of the march westward. The same kind of opportunities and difficulties, colored with local variations, recurred to make the strong and sturdy growth from frontier simplicity to permanent development. It is this fact that has given a distinctive quality to American life — the self-reliance, courage and independence which dominate American character.[1] A study of the frontier, therefore, will give us the key to our history.

Moreover, the genesis of any settlement will show the basis and character of development. Many distinctive characteristics of any community have grown out of peculiar conditions or incidents in its early history. It is this frontier life, with its privations, its battles, its pleasures, its government, and its crude experiments and compromises, together with the effects of natural conditions and environment, that discloses the very beginnings of social life. We must study these frontier beginnings as well

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[1] Frederick J. Turner, "Significance of the Frontier in American History," *Annual Report American Historical Assn.*, 1893, 200-201. See also McCarty, "Early Social and Religious Experiments in Iowa," *Iowa Historical Record*, January, 1902. McCarty, *Territorial Governors of the Old Northwest.*

as later developments if we would appreciate our local history.

Indeed there is a romantic fascination surrounding the early days of every community. We listen with thrilling interest to the stories of the first settlers, as they recount the hardships and dangers of home making on the boundless prairie of a new country. The simple, rugged life of these early pioneers in itself has a charm that increases with the passing of the frontier line. We admire the dauntless pioneer with his ax and gun. We admire his persevering labors in spite of obstacles and discouragement, and we admire his courage in the face of every danger.

On through forest and over plain, westward and ever westward pressed the adventurous and hardy pioneers. And still farther westward, on over the trackless prairie, where the elk, deer, and other wild animals roamed at will, and where occasional bands of roving Indians had camped and hunted, and departed unmolested. Undaunted by the most severe weather, undismayed by the perils and hardships of a long journey, they pressed forward through the wilderness, leaving their own trail in the tall grass of the prairie, crossing the turbid streams as best they could, exploring the woods and prairies, ever on the lookout for a good location for their new home. The frontier line was gradually moving toward the west, and these pioneer settlers were the advance guard of the westward movement. They were willing to undergo all the hardships and privations of frontier life in order that they might found a home for themselves and their families.[1]

Midway in this westward march was Iowa — the beau-

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[1] See the writer's "Early Social and Religious Experiments in Iowa," in the January, 1902, number of the *Iowa Historical Record,* for a more complete description of the westward movement in Iowa, and the experiences of the early pioneers throughout the state.

tiful fertile land of Iowa. But at the Mississippi progress was delayed for a time, as Iowa soil was owned by the Indians and title had to be acquired before this territory could be thrown open to settlement. Prior to this, the mining settlement of Dubuque had been established[1] and several abortive attempts at settlement had been made but they were not permanent. During these early times trappers and Indian traders roamed over the vast prairies, camping, hunting and trapping on the banks of streams and in wooded places; but always moving and always pushing farther westward ahead of the settlers. They were only skirmishers scouting ahead of the real army of progress. The few squatters who tried to find homes were driven off by the United States soldiers until the Indian title was extinguished and the country finally opened up for settlement, June 1, 1833.

Even then actual title was not given until years later when the land sales were held, but this fact did not deter actual settlers, who flocked into Iowa and began to take up the most advantageous locations. The first settlers chose claims along the rivers. Burlington and Fort Madison were settled in the fall of 1833. Davenport was formally named in 1836, and Keokuk was laid out in 1837. As settlers increased and pushed westward, other towns were formed. Iowa City was laid out on the banks of the Iowa River in 1839, and became the capital of the territory. In the same year the government removed the Pottawattomie Indians to Southwestern Iowa and erected a fort at Council Bluffs. Two Catholic missionaries established a mission there, but it was a frontier outpost for some years before it was reached by actual settlements. In 1843 Fort

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[1] Julian Dubuque in 1788 purchased a tract of land from the Sac and Fox Indians and began to work the lead mines. *Annals of Iowa*, April, 1896, 330. Salter, *Iowa, the First Free State in the Louisiana Purchase*; Gue, *History of Iowa*, vol. i, chap. 10; McCarty, "Early Social and Religious Experiments in Iowa."

Des Moines was built for the United States dragoons for the protection of the frontier from the Indian depredations.

As settlers increased and the hostile Indians became more difficult to control, a fort farther north was established in 1849, called Fort Clarke. The name was changed a few years later to Fort Dodge. In 1853 the troops were moved from Fort Dodge north to Fort Ridgely, but the vacated site was purchased and in the beginning of the year 1854 the town of Fort Dodge was laid out and thereafter became the distributing center for Northwest Iowa.

It was not until 1854-5 that the vanguard of settlement spread out into Northwestern Iowa. Prior to that time there were only two cabins north of Fort Dodge, that of the adventurous Henry Lott, near the mouth of Lott's Creek in Humboldt County, and one built by William Miller six miles north of Fort Dodge, on the east side of the river. These were rival trading posts which did a flourishing business while the soldiers were at Fort Dodge. Lott was a desperate character and was continually stirring up trouble with the Indians. The Indians were inclined to resent the encroachments of the whites, and freely indulged their natural trickery in attempts at despoiling the settlers. This was of course resisted and trouble often followed. These frequent clashes, together with the unscrupulous conduct of such men as Lott, caused a deep-seated resentment among the redmen. The Indian depredations increased and kept the settlers, who were coming in, continually alarmed. It was this smoldering resentment that caused much of the trouble in the years that followed, and culminated in the Spirit Lake massacre of 1857, and the Indian border troubles of 1862 and 1863. These periods will be more fully considered in later chapters.

In the face of such conditions as these the early settle-

ment of Northwest Iowa began. Traders, locaters, surveyors and stray settlers all carried back to Fort Dodge tales of the marvelous beauty of the lands along the east and west forks of the Des Moines River. During the summer of 1854 Ambrose A. Call and Asa C. Call built the pioneer cabin in Kossuth County, on the east fork of the river, and that summer and fall a colony of energetic settlers took claims there.[1]

At this time the soil of Palo Alto had not been trod by a permanent settler. History records one incident of the early march across the prairies. The United States troops, on their removal from Fort Dodge in 1854, marched north to Fort Ridgely and their course took them along the river. One evening after a hard day's march, they came to a beautiful little lake and made their camp in an oak grove upon the shore. A terrible storm raged that night and the detachment were compelled to stay there several days before they could continue their northern journey.[2] In spite of the inclement weather we cannot but believe that those gallant soldiers saw the beauties around them, for they were in Palo Alto County — the first arrivals upon its virgin soil. Its beauties and fertility could not long remain unknown and the time was soon to arrive for the first settlement of the county.

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[1] Sketches by Ambrose A. Call in *Algona Upper Des Moines*, "History of Kossuth County."

[2] William D. Powers, letter to Semi-Centennial Committee. Gue, *History of Iowa*.

CHAPTER II

The West Bend Settlement

The first settlement in Palo Alto County was made in May, 1855. William Carter and son, Fayette Carter and wife, and Jeremiah Evans and family selected permanent claims on the east bank of the Des Moines River near where West Bend now stands.[1] They came from Benton County, Iowa, making their way through the sparsely settled country by slow-going ox teams, and from Fort Dodge following the dim trail to the northwest, known as the "Military Road." It was the route that the soldiers had taken in going north to Fort Ridgely, and the subsequent supply wagons had left their marks on the prairie grass. Slight and uncertain was the trail, but it led these pioneers straight to their new home.

Before making a final location they decided to look around a little more, and went farther north, camping on May 30th on the east bank of Medium Lake in what is now known as Jackman's Grove. As it was late in the season it seemed best to return, and early the next morning the settlers retraced their steps and began at once to make a permanent settlement at West Bend. Samuel McClelland, who accompanied them, did not stay but returned home. Carter and Evans had taken adjoining claims on a beauti-

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[1] These facts about the early settlement at West Bend are from interviews with A. B. Carter, and from a letter written by him to the Semi-Centennial Committee May 12, 1906. I have often talked to Mr. Carter and listened to his interesting tales of those early days Some important facts are corroborated by William D. Powers's letters to me and especially a letter to the Semi-Centennial Committee, June 20, 1906, which is later given in its entirety.

ful rolling piece of land near the shore of the river, with plenty of wood and water close by — an ideal place for a pioneer cabin.[1]

On the 31st day of May, 1855, on the line between the two claims, the first prairie in Palo Alto County was broken with five yoke of oxen hitched to a 28-inch plow. It was a great day for those settlers, who now began to see that nature's wilderness was in fact the provider of their future home. In the days that followed, trees were cut and roughly shaped into logs, and a log house built. It was about 14x18, of rough hewn logs, with no floor, roofed over with "shakes," rough slabs about three feet long lapped over each other, and kept in place by poles placed across above them. Only a small piece of ground was sown, that spring. Game of all kinds was plenty. Elk and deer were often seen, and the settlers fared well during the spring and summer, as they had brought some supplies with them.

Some time that summer, perhaps in July, a band of Sioux Indians, under the leadership of the famous chief, Inkpadutah, came and camped near by. They did not appear to be hostilely inclined, but were nevertheless very troublesome. The settlers' covered wagons, containing all their provisions, were drawn up in the shade of the trees about a hundred yards from the Carter cabin, which was just being completed. Mrs. Evans saw an Indian sneak into one of the wagons and shortly afterward a butcher-knife and some small bags of beans were missed. The settlers had a very savage dog which they tied to the wagon, and it kept such good watch that the Indians maintained a respectful distance, although they longed to get their itching fingers on some more of the white man's

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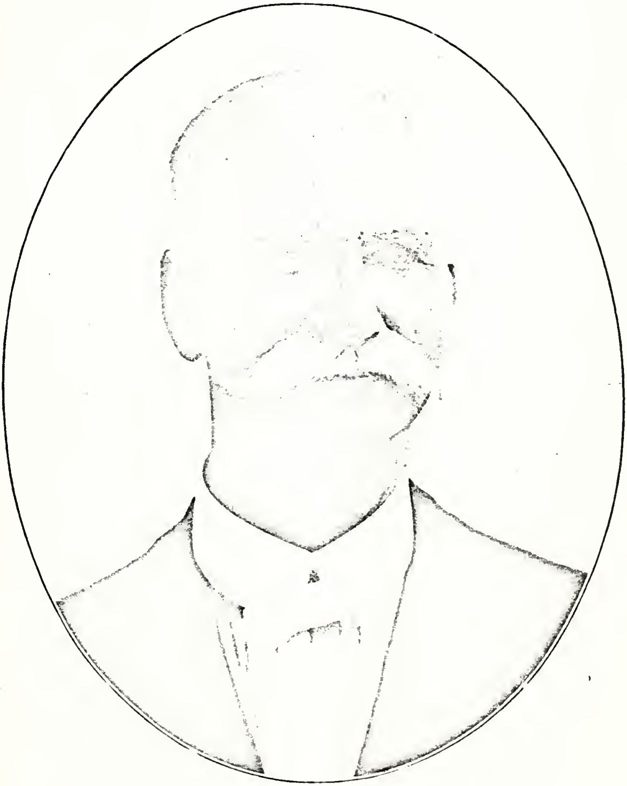
[1] This was in section 21, West Bend township. William Carter's son, A. B. Carter, still owns the old farm and lived there until the spring of 1909, when he moved to the town of West Bend.



A. B. CARTER

property. Finally the Indians drove the settlers' cattle away, killing and devouring one of the oxen. The rest of the cattle were found near the east fork of the Des Moines River, a good many miles to the south. The little colony was glad to be well rid of this insolent band of Indians.

In the fall William Carter returned to Benton County and brought back Mrs. Carter and their son Ben (A. B. Carter), who was then fourteen years old. They traveled in a wagon drawn by oxen, and after leaving Fort Dodge it was a slow and tedious journey for sixty miles along the rough trail over the waving plains of grass. They arrived at the settlement in October, 1855, and received a royal welcome to their new home.

The Carter and Evans families were the only settlers during the year 1855. They raised some sod corn, forty or fifty bushels of buckwheat, and about two hundred bushels of turnips. This was considered a good return for the few acres of prairie sod. These pioneers did not suffer for food, as they had brought flour and bacon with them, and wild game was plenty. They threshed the buckwheat with flails, ground it in a coffee mill, and had plenty of buckwheat cakes.

Mr. A. B. Carter, in telling about their experiences, says: "It was very cold here during the first winter, and I guess we all were nearly frozen to death. Every one of my toes and fingers turned black, with frost. One time we started to go to Fort Dodge with a load of shingles that we had made. There was a great demand for those shingles then, and we had three pairs of cattle on the sled. Got down about Rutland, and it was getting dark and we got stuck in a snowdrift and had to camp there all night. We were nearly frozen to death.

"During the winter of '55 a band of Sioux Indians camped in our woods about fifty rods from the house. From that time on there were adventures every day. The

old chief's name was Sleepy-Eye. He was undoubtedly a first class man, and kept strict control of the Indians. A few things were stolen from us that winter. One thing was a hatchet. We had just come home from Fort Dodge. The Indians got the hatchet out of our sled, and we told a young Indian about it. He shook his head and went to the camp. Soon he came back with the hatchet and told us who took it. The one who had taken it was the best hunter around and a pretty tough one, and that Indian never came there again. It showed that the chief had pretty good control of them.

"That was a hard winter. The snow was very deep and as all wild game was driven away, the Indians came pretty near starving. The Indians would watch us grinding buckwheat in the coffee mill and thought we had to work hard enough for our living. I used to try and get some of the young bucks to try the coffee mill, but only one of them would help me and I would divide with him. The Indians were in desperate straits for food. My brother and I went to Fort Dodge and got a dressed hog and what corn meal we could bring back, and peddled that to them. They bought what they could, and we bought lots of moccasins from them. We went to Fort Dodge and traded moccasins and furs for provisions. There was one pair of oxen that they had noticed we did not work, so they came and demanded that pair of oxen that they had not seen us working, as they were about starving. The next day we hitched up all the oxen and hauled up some wood to show that we needed them. We went to Fort Dodge again and got them something to eat. When the wild birds came they went up north. Two days after one of the Indians came back and stayed with us all summer. He was about my age, a young boy, and the only Indian among them who would do any work. He came to help do the chores and took quite a notion to me, and that was what brought him back. He

helped anything he could, tried to learn the language, and learned very fast. He tried to do anything he saw anyone else do. We called him 'Josh.'

"We had hunting experiences — lots of them. In the fall of '55 my father and my brother and I came up here and I don't remember where we camped the first night, but the second night we camped up at Walnut Grove, about where the Laughlins settled later. Got up there in the afternoon. Were probably four miles from our team, when along about four o'clock we saw a drove of elk, probably two hundred of them. We got north of them, within a hundred rods, and saw that the main drove was on the south of the creek. On the bottom of the pond over beyond that, we saw two big elk by themselves. Father tried to get these two. He started and as he went along ducks would fly up, and we supposed that every time the ducks flew the elk would be frightened away, but they did not care at all. Father kept gaining on those two; we could see him as he waded through the pond. We lay there and watched him. He fired a shot. One elk laid down and the other started to run, but stopped in the middle of another report. The elk ran, and would stop, and finally the old rifle popped again. Father shot seven times and had both down — two of the largest elk I ever saw. That was my first hunting experience. Deer were plenty. In the spring of '56 there were elk with our cattle half a dozen times. I wanted to take a gun and get after them, but Father said they were poor then and I should wait until they got fatter. I never got an elk. In the fall of '56, old Sam McClelland, my brother, and I, and this young Indian that I have spoken about, went to Lost Island. There had been thousands of elk there, but an Indian told us that he saw four Indians driving them away."[1]

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[1] Interview with A. B. Carter. Some of the details given above regarding the crop of the first year are taken from a letter of Mr. Carter's to the Semi-Centennial Committee, May 12, 1906.

Early in the spring of 1856 William D. Powers joined the West Bend colony. He tells the story of his coming to Palo Alto County as follows: "I walked through Palo Alto under command of Major Sherman on our march to Fort Ridgely on the 7th of March, 1854. We marched from there to St. Paul and took boats and landed at Jefferson Barracks and from there took boats up the Missouri and landed at Fort Belknap, and from there to Fort Riley. I was discharged at that post on August 29, 1855. I worked two months in the bakehouse. I served five years as a baker. I came to St. Louis and bought one yoke of oxen and a wagon and I traveled up through Missouri and came up to Dakotah [City] and stayed a few days with Ed McKnight. He had a small log house to live in, the only one in Dakotah [City]. He brought me down to a steep bank of the river where there was a cave. He took me up to the south corner of Palo Alto and showed me a piece of land to live on. I made my claim on section 34 on the 21st day of December, 1855. I saw a log house about a mile from where McKnight and I were taking a lunch. We went up and found Jerry Evans living with his family. He told us there was not a nail in the house. A little farther toward the river we found another log house occupied by William Carter, father of A. B. Carter, and family. I went back to Dakotah [City] and lived in the cave all winter. I came up to my claim and put up my army tent I had bought in St. Louis. This putting up my tent was on the 9th of April, 1856, at what is called West Bend now. The country looked wild, no people around. However, in the fall some of the Sioux Indians came down the river to hunt. There was plenty of game at that time. The chief, Och-see-da-washta, with a few of his warriors, would pay me a visit and take some dinner with me. I had two barrels of hardtack I brought up from St. Louis. They are hard biscuit for army use. The winter of 1858

W. D. Powers

John McCormick

was a cold and snowy time. We wanted to go to Dakotah [City] to get some flour. We could not take any teams along on account of the deep snow. So J. Lynn, S. McClelland, and a few more made hand sleighs and tramped the snow and dragged our sleighs along and started back with one sack of flour and fifty pounds of pork. It took four days to go and come. Oh, what a change from those hard times! The Indians would talk about the time I was captured by the Yankton Indians at Devil's Lake. But those wild times are gone and those dark days are set. The bright day of civilization has come. Those wild times and thousands of dark hours are gone forever."[1]

The natural advantages afforded by the location and the fact that they were on the main route of travel to the north, combined to give this little settlement a very important position. Rugged and persevering in character, these first settlers have had a vital and lasting influence on the development of the county.

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[1] Letter of William D. Powers, June 20, 1906.

CHAPTER III

The Irish Colony

In July, 1856, another notable group of settlers came to Palo Alto County. This was a colony of Irishmen from Kane County, Illinois, who with brave hearts and steadfast purpose came on into the frontier wilderness in search of homes. There were seven families in this colony, and it consisted of the following persons: James Nolan, Anastasia his wife, Maria his daughter, and two sons, James and John F.; John Neary and his wife, and one son, John F. Neary, and one daughter, Mary; Edward Mahan and Margaret his wife, Ann and Ellen his daughters, and two sons, John and Myles; Martin Laughlin, his wife Mary, three sons, Lott, J. T., and Patrick, and one daughter, Ellen; John Nolan and wife Bridget, and one son, Charlie; Thomas Downey and Ellen Downey his wife, and Ellen his daughter; Orrin Sylvester and his wife Ellen. Patrick Jackman and Thomas Laughlin, both single, came with these settlers though not members of the families above enumerated.[1]

There were six ox teams in the party and they wended their weary way toward the west. Their proposed destination was in the vicinity of Sioux City, Iowa, but at Fort Dodge they met a man by the name of Lynch, who had been with the government surveying party in 1855, and who told them of the splendid location for settlers along the west branch of the Des Moines River, where there was plenty of timber, abundance of good water, and the tall

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[1] Interviews with J. F. Neary, Lott Laughlin, J. J. Mahan, Myles Mahan, Patrick Jackman, Charles Nolan and others.

Mr. and Mrs. Jas. Nolan

Edward and Margaret Mahan

John Neary

P. R. Jackman

Lott Laughlin

John J. Mahan

Chas. T. Nolan

grass was ample evidence of the fertility of the soil. Some of the party went forward with Mr. Lynch and looked over the ground, returning with glowing accounts of the country. So the entire party started on the rough trail from Fort Dodge. They reached the Des Moines River at last and camped in the timber at what is now known as Murphy's Bayou. They stayed there nearly a week while the various members of the party prospected the country and selected their claims. While here these pioneers discovered the first traces of Indians. Two dozen slaughtered geese were found hanging in a large elm tree where they had been left by the redskins. But the incident scarcely more than awakened their curiosity, as they had not occasion as yet to know the treacherous savage nature that was later to spread terror throughout the settlement.

These pioneers soon moved up the river and settled on section 14, in Emmetsburg township, about two miles northwest from the present city of Emmetsburg. Such brave and sturdy settlers as these were good examples of the frontiersman. They commenced with what nature furnished them and began to build their homes from the prairie and the woods. Although it was getting late for plowing, the breaking up of the prairie was at once begun by doubling up on their ox teams. The next task was to put up some hay for the cows and young stock, which they had brought with them in addition to their oxen. They built rough shelters for their stock, and as fast as possible constructed rude cabins out of logs, the bark still on, and the cracks chinked with mud. These cabins all had clay floors, and were roofed with " shakes " or thatched with hay, covered with sod. Most of the cabins had cellars or " root houses " as they were called, dug on the outside of the house, roofed with logs, and covered over with clay and sod. This " root house " had no outside opening and was entered by steps leading down from inside the cabin.

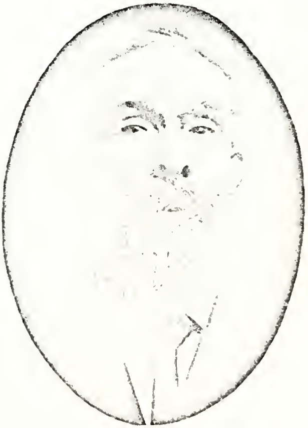
The cabin fire would keep the frost out of the cellar and there was no danger of freezing. Several of the cabins had rough fireplaces built in the clay floor and under the side logs, well plastered with clay and with a piece of tin or sheet iron at the back. The chimney was usually a hole in the roof for the smoke to pass through and was in fact the most prominent feature about that sort of convenience in those days. Plain accommodations, hearty fare and plenty of hard work, characterized the daily life of these first settlers.

Little of interest transpired during the first six months in their new homes, and except for an occasional Indian, or a hunt for wild game, there was little excitement to break the routine work on their claims. These settlers had come direct from a well settled community, and as yet little appreciated the full value of nature's gifts. Muskrats, beaver, mink, as well as wolves and foxes, were plentiful. But the settlers knew little about hunting and practically nothing about trapping. It was not until 1858, when three professional trappers came and camped near them, and were offered over $7,000 for their winter's catch, that the settlers began to realize the value of such pelts. Wild fowl of every kind was abundant. It was a common sight to see Medium Lake black with wild geese. Deer, antelope, and elk were often seen and two buffalo were sighted by some of these settlers that year. Nature's abundance was some compensation for pioneer hardships. Supplies and provisions were obtained from Fort Dodge, though the settlers had to go to Iowa City for their corn meal and made several trips that fall. As the snow was very deep the first winter, the men were compelled to make trips to Fort Dodge on snow shoes in real Indian fashion. If it had not been for the furs for trade, they would have found it hard to subsist, as there was very little money in those far-off settlements.

MR. AND MRS. JAS. HICKEY

MRS. MAGGIE HICKEY-MCNALLY
First White Child Born in Palo Alto
County

M. H. Crowley



J. P. Crowley

James Hickey and wife joined the Irish colony in the early fall of 1856, and remained with the settlement during the first winter. Their daughter (Mrs. Patrick McNally), born in October of that year, was the first white child born in the county. The following spring the Hickeys took up a claim farther south across the river on section 35-96-33.

One of the early settlers who came to this county after the Irish colony settled here, was Jerry Crowley, Sr., and family, consisting of five children, J. P., Michael H., Katie, Ellen and John. They came in the fall of 1856 and settled in a picturesque grove of natural timber on the west side of the river in section 35, in what is now Walnut township, about five miles north of the Irish settlement. Mr. Crowley built a house that fall and then went to Fort Dodge to get supplies for the winter. He bought some sod corn from Shippey and potatoes from Evans. There were no white neighbors nearer than the Irish colony, but in the winter of 1856, some time in December, a band of fourteen Indians camped in the woods not over twenty-five rods from Crowley's house. The family could see the tepees plainly from their dooryard. They were good Indians, with Sleepy-Eye as their chief, and did not bother the Crowleys any during that winter. In fact they were given large quantities of flour and other supplies. There were three trappers who camped along the river that winter and traded somewhat with the Indians. These trappers got a great many valuable furs and took them to Fort Dodge, but the snow was so deep that they did not get back with the supplies in time to trade with the Indians before the Indians left. These same Indians left in the spring of 1857, at the time Inkpadutah's band perpetrated the Spirit Lake massacre. Michael H. Crowley, describing the band of Indians, says: "They camped not over twenty-five or thirty rods from our house. I used to see the squaws

chopping wood. They never tried to molest us. I was always afraid of them. One in particular I remember. He would come in with a great big club, all tacked full of brass tacks. It had a steel spear in the end of it and a skunk tail hanging to the end. He was a ferocious looking fellow and I never liked him, and was very glad when they left. The rest of the family did not seem to be afraid of them. Jerry used to go over to the tepees and play with the Indian children. They would slide down hill together."[1]

Roger Corcoran, his wife and three children, came with Jerry Crowley, Sr. They settled on the south side of the river in section 35. It was the intention of Mr. Corcoran and Mr. Crowley to take the same claim, buy it, and divide the timber. But this agreement was not carried out, as the former left the next spring and did not return.

There was a community of interest and helpfulness pervading this Irish colony. The seven original families had located close together in a compact little settlement for protection and social convenience. With stout hearts and willing hands these sturdy settlers together braved the trials of frontier life. This Irish colony, as it was called, thus became the nucleus of the settlement in the central part of the county and exerted an important influence over the community.

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[1] Interview with M. H. Crowley.

CHAPTER IV

The Indians and the Spirit Lake Massacre

The pioneer family on the western prairie could endure with fortitude the life on a lonely claim, but one danger continually menaced its peace of mind. The roving bands of Indians were generally unfriendly and often treacherously destructive. Once roused to vengeance, the savage nature found expression in deeds of pillage, arson and murder that made one's blood run cold.

Many different tribes of Indians had roamed over the Iowa prairies before the advent of the white settlers, but all these had gradually drifted westward, and their land acquired by the government, until in 1851 the last of Western Iowa was ceded by treaty to the United States. Of all the bands of Indians the Sioux were perhaps the most ferocious and warlike. They were continually at war with other tribes and as they saw the onward march of the white settler and felt the encroachments upon their beloved hunting ground, they became sullen and bitter toward the pioneers.

Some unfortunate conditions served to intensify this feeling. As early as 1847, Henry Lott, an unscrupulous ruffian, who had settled far out on the frontier in Webster County, organized a gang of desperate characters who stole horses and committed many depredations among the settlers and Indians. Lott's cabin finally became such a notorious rendezvous, that when a band of Indians under the chief Sidominadotah tracked a number of stolen ponies to his place, they ordered him to leave the county. As he did not do so, a few days afterwards the Indians killed his

cattle, drove his family out, and burned his cabin. Lott fled terror-stricken, leaving his wife and children, and one of his small sons died from the cold and exposure. Lott swore vengeance upon the Sioux, but it was several years before he returned.

The Indians keenly resented the advance of the white man and when the surveyors crossed the Des Moines in 1848, the Indians attacked them, broke up their instruments and drove them back. This incident led to the establishment of Fort Dodge by the government.

In 1853 Lott and his step-son came back again and settled on the east branch of the Des Moines River in Humboldt County, at a place that has since been known as Lott's Creek.

In the following January, the chief of the same band of Sioux, unsuspecting, and not recognizing his old enemy, camped a short distance from Lott's cabin. Burning with hatred and revenge, in retaliation for the death of his son and destruction of his property years before, Lott treacherously killed Chief Sidominadotah and his whole family except a little girl who hid in the bushes and a boy who was left for dead.[1]

The bodies of the chief and his family were brutally left where they lay, the camp was looted and burned, and the Lotts escaped down the river. They sold the booty and hastened still farther west. Several days later Inkpadutah, a brother of the murdered chief, discovered the bodies of the victims, and it was soon known that Lott was the murderer.

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[1] For the story of Lott and his troubles see Gue, *History of Iowa*, vol. 1, pp 289-292; Smith, *History of Dickinson County*, chap. 2; Flickinger, *Pioneer History of Pocahontas County*, pp. 27-28, etc. See also an excellent article by L. F. Andrews in *Des Moines Register and Leader*, August 12, 1907.

This Indian boy recovered and was afterward known as "Josh." He was a frequent visitor at the Carter cabin.

The Indians were thoroughly enraged and demanded the punishment of Lott, but though attempts were made to follow him, he was never apprehended. Not long after this the head of the murdered chief was ingloriously stuck up on a pole in the town of Homer near Fort Dodge.[1] The failure to punish Lott increased the rage and desire for vengeance among the Sioux. The settlers were greatly alarmed, and there was a vague feeling of distrust that boded ill for the future.

Inkpadutah, also known as "Scarlet Point" or "Red End," became the chief of the Sioux band. Reckless, domineering and cruel, he ruled his tribe with a strong hand and his harshness drove many of his followers to join more peaceful tribes. His band thus dwindled until it became a small group of straggling Indians, who ranged the country throughout the northwest, committing all sorts of petty depredations. Harvey Ingham, in an article in the *Midland Monthly*, thus describes their actions: "Inkpadutah and his followers contented themselves with stripping trappers and surveyors, stealing horses, and foraging on scattered settlers, always maintaining a hostile and threatening attitude. Many pages of the *Midland* would be required for a brief enumeration of the petty annoyances, pilferings and more serious assaults which occurred. At Dakotah City, in Humboldt County, the cabin of E. McKnight was rifled in the spring of 1855. Farther north, within a few miles of Algona, the cabin of Malachi Clark was entered, and the settlers gathered in great alarm to drive out the Indians — a band of eighty braves led by Inkpadutah in person. Still farther north, near where Bancroft stands, W. H. Ingham was captured by

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[1] "Sketch of Early History," by Ambrose A. Call, *History of Kossuth County*, Union Pub. Co. The late Charles Aldrich also had a vivid remembrance of this, and says that the skull was fractured in several places by a blunt instrument. L. F. Andrews's article, *Des Moines Register and Leader*, August 12, 1907.

Umposhota, a leader under Inkpadutah in the massacre, and was held a prisoner for three days."[1]

The winter of 1856 was a very severe one. The intense cold and heavy snow was followed by violent storms, and the sufferings of the settlers were extreme. Inkpadutah and his band had been camping at Loon Lake, but in December, 1856, started down the Little Sioux River as far as Smithland. Another part of the band was in camp near Springfield (now Jackson), Minnesota.

In February, 1857, the Indians and settlers had trouble at Smithland, until the redskins finally were driven away. With their savage natures aroused and with a pent-up desire for vengeance, the combined band of Sioux started north. Inkpadutah knew the defenseless condition of the scattered settlers and he determined to wreak an awful vengeance upon the countrymen of Henry Lott. As the band moved northward they robbed and pillaged with destructive hand, and committed the most barbarous outrages that ever a savage mind devised. No one had been killed, however, when with their murderous desires roused by these atrocities to the highest pitch, they came to the peaceful little settlement on the banks of the lakes in Dickinson County.

Mrs. Abbie Gardner Sharp, the sole survivor of that terrible massacre, in a letter written in 1887, thus describes that never-to-be-forgotten event:

" It is with sadness that I recall to memory the ill-fated March the 8th, 1857, when Inkpadutah and his murderous band invaded the peaceful and happy little settlement of Spirit and Okoboji Lakes and completely demolished it. It is not thirty years since those horrible atrocities were enacted, and having lost all on that sad day that made life dear to me, and though wrecked in health, I still

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[1] Harvey Ingham, *Midland Monthly*; Smith, *History of Dickinson County*, p. 38; Abbie Gardner Sharp, *History of the Spirit Lake Massacre*, chap. vi.

live a witness to those terrible scenes. The outbreak was as sudden and unexpected as a thunderbolt from a cloudless sky. The Indians approached and through their professions of friendship got into the house, taking the people by surprise, and attacking in such a way that one family could not help another. My father was shot down while his back was turned getting the Indians some flour. They then rushed upon my mother and sister, beating them over the head with the butts of their guns, and drove them out in the dooryard and killed them. My brother and two sisters, all little children, were clinging to me in speechless terror. They next seized these helpless children, heedless of their piteous cries for the help I was powerless to give them, dragging them out of doors, and beating them to death with sticks of stove wood. All through their course they shot down the men when their backs were turned, and then rushed upon the helpless and terror-stricken women and children and killed them in the most cruel and shocking manner. At the time of the massacre I was little more than a child of less than fourteen summers, and was with three other women taken captive, suffering for three months all the cruelties and indignities that Indians only know how to inflict.''[1]

Over forty persons — men, women and children — were thus brutally murdered at the lakes,[2] and the savages, after holding their war dance and painting their victories in signs upon the smoothed surface of a tree, broke camp and moved northward with their plunder to find fresh fields for their murderous work.

Our settlers in Palo Alto County knew nothing of these

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[1] From a letter of Mrs. Abbie Gardner Sharp, Aug. 4, 1887, *Annals of Iowa*, October, 1898, p. 550. Mrs. Sharp's book, *History of the Spirit Lake Massacre*, is a graphic description of the events leading up to that terrible day, and contains a vivid picture of the massacre, the relief expedition, the captivity of Abbie Gardner, her ransom and release.

[2] Abbie Gardner Sharp, *History of the Spirit Lake Massacre*, p. 47.

tragedies that were being enacted such a short distance away. The news was first brought to them by three men from Jasper County — Wheelock, Parmenter and Howe by name, who were on their way to the lakes to join the settlement; but when they found the cabins in ashes and the dead bodies of the victims lying where they had fallen, they hurried back to give the alarm.

These harrowing reports spread terror throughout the whole northwest, and many settlers fled to places of safety. The members of the little Irish colony could hardly believe that Indians who seemed so peaceful when camped so near them that winter could commit such deeds.[1] It was indeed a miracle that they were spared. But in spite of the general stampede to Fort Dodge, the Irish settlers remained for some time. Their cabins furnished a convenient station for the soldiers of the relief expedition as we shall see in the next chapter. It was only after the soldiers of the expedition had all returned home, that the faithful little band finally left the colony to seek a refuge at Fort Dodge until the following spring.

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[1] The late J. F. Neary, a member of the original colony, once told me that he thought Inkpadutah's band camped until March, 1857, in Crowley's woods, five miles north of the colony, and M. H. Crowley is of the same opinion. But A. B. Carter, who knew Sleepy-Eye and his band very well, is positive that it was Sleepy-Eye's band that camped at Crowley's and remembers Sleepy-Eye telling him that it was Inkpadutah's band of bad Indians that was killing the whites on the Sioux and at the lakes.

CHAPTER V

The Relief Expedition

The alarming news of the massacre stirred the towns of Fort Dodge and Webster City. Public meetings were held, and within three days about one hundred men had volunteered to go in pursuit of the Indians and to the relief of the settlers. Such supplies as could be procured were hastily gathered and the men organized into companies.

Governor Grimes had previously appointed Major William Williams of Fort Dodge as the executive agent to protect the frontier, and he now promptly took charge of the expedition. C. B. Richards was captain of Company A of Fort Dodge, John F. Duncombe captain of Company B of Fort Dodge, and J. C. Johnson captain of Company C of Webster City. The number of men was considerably augmented from time to time by enlistments from the settlers and others on the way. In all, the expedition numbered about one hundred twenty-five men.

Realizing that delay would be dangerous for the success of their undertaking, they made ready quickly, and March 24, 1857, started on the difficult journey of over eighty miles to the scene of the massacre. The severe cold and deep snow rendered their progress slow, and they were poorly equipped for such hardships. After four days of difficult travel and extreme suffering, they reached the Evans cabin on the edge of Palo Alto County. Here nine men decided that the hardships were too great and returned home, leaving the loyal soldiers to fight their way onward.

Several accounts of the progress of the expedition by men who marched with the command have been preserved and we will let these actual participants tell the rest of the story.[1]

On the morning of the 28th " the command started early and by hard and constant work reached Shippey's at dark. At McCormick's, a mile below Shippey's, we found Angus McBane, Cyrus C. Carpenter, William B. Pollock, and Andrew Hood, who joined Company A and went on with us from that point. We also found at Shippey's a part of a load of flour which A. M. Luce had left some weeks before, having got this far when the deep snow had rendered it impossible to proceed with his load. He had taken what he could haul on a hand sled and gone on to his family at the lakes. With this we replenished our meagre supplies and the next day reached the Irish colony in Palo Alto County, where we were able to get some hay for a bed and sleep under the cattle sheds. Our teams being nearly worn out we got an ox team to help us along."[2]

" Sunday, the 29th, was a beautiful, clear day; snow melted until long stretches of bare ground could be found, and we made the longest march of any day since leaving Fort Dodge, reaching the Irish colony, sixteen miles from Shippey's. Here all the settlers for many miles above and below the river had collected for company during the long, tedious winter. They knew nothing of the massacre at Spirit Lake until [the news was being carried to Fort Dodge] though they were only about thirty-five miles away; they were living in little log cabins and dugouts

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[1] The *Annals of Iowa*, October, 1898, contains the complete history of this remarkable march, graphically told by those who were with the expedition. The rest of this chapter is taken from these personal reminiscences as quoted in the *Annals*. See also Mrs. Abbie Gardner Sharp, *History of the Spirit Lake Massacre*; Gue, *History of Iowa*, vol. i, chap. xxv; Smith, *History Dickinson County*, chap. vi.

[2] Recollections of Capt. Charles B. Richards, *Annals of Iowa*, October, 1898, p. 512.

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and seemed very destitute; most of them had only been there since the summer and fall before and had raised nothing. . . [A day or so later a scouting party that had been sent out to reconnoitre] met that heroic band of refugees from Springfield, Minnesota, where they had made a gallant defense, driven the savages back and were fleeing from their homes, destitute, having left everything but the clothes they had on. Their only conveyance was a sled drawn by a pair of oxen, and they were nearly starved. Here we camped and did all we could to make them comfortable."[1] [The next morning the rescued party were sent back in charge of the surgeon to the Irish colony while the soldiers resumed the march.]

"We fully realized now that we were in the Indian country and Major Williams, with his long experience among the redskins, took every precaution to guard against a surprise. We camped at Big Island Lake, where we found fresh signs of Indians. We reached Granger's Grove, on the Des Moines River, close to the Minnesota state line, that night, where the disappointing news reached us that the Indians had left the place some five days before, and that a detachment of United States mounted troops, sixty in number, were then quartered at Springfield. Our whole company was sorely disappointed. After having undergone such privations, we hoped that though we were not in time to relieve the distressed settlers, we might be able to mete out to their murderers and torturers the justice they so richly merited. Our provisions by this time were running short, from the fact that owing to the deep snow all the way it had taken us longer to reach our destination than was expected. The men were so eager to follow the Indians, and leave the teams where they were, each man taking what provisions he

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[1] Narrative of W. K. Laughlin, *Annals of Iowa*, October, 1898, p. 542.

could carry, that Major Williams offered twenty-five dollars a hundred for a few sacks of flour. But the settlers only had part of a load of flour and did not know when any more could be had. The Major refused to exercise military authority and take it by force, and on the morning of the 2nd of April he sent twenty-five men under Captain Johnson to bury the dead at Spirit Lake."[1]

Robert McCormick was one of the volunteers who performed that sad mission. On the return this party suffered great hardships and two of the number, Captain Johnson and Private Burkholder, became separated from their comrades and perished in the cold. Their bones were found years later in Palo Alto County by William Shea on the northeast quarter of section 3-95-33.

The main body of the expedition returned to the Irish colony. "Here the officers were called together to consult as to ways and means to get food to keep the men together until we could reach Fort Dodge. The settlers at the colony were on short rations and could spare nothing. We decided to buy a steer and kill for the party, but we had no money and the owner refused to sell without pay. We offered to give the personal obligation of all the officers, and assured him the state would pay a good price; but this was not satisfactory. We therefore decided to take one *vi et armis*, and detailed several men to kill and dress the steer. They were met by men, women and children, armed with pitchforks to resist the sacrifice, and not being able to convince them either of the necessity of the case or that they would get pay for the steer, I ordered Lieutenant Stratton and a squad of men with loaded guns to go and take the steer, when, seeing we were determined, and that further resistance would be useless, the hostile party retired. The animal was soon dressed and dis-

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[1] Paper by Michael Sweeny, *Annals of Iowa*, October, 1898, p. 540.

tributed to the men, and for the first time in ten days they had a full meal.

"We had hoped the detachment sent to the lakes might overtake us, but as they did not come we left what meat had not been used for the men, and resumed our march. The day was warm until about noon, when a cold rain began, making it dreary and dismal. We found several small creeks and all the ravines full of water, but crossed all without much detention until we arrived at Cylinder Creek, about twelve or fifteen miles from the colony, and two from Shippey's, where we expected to camp for the night. This point we reached about 3 p. m., when we found the bottom on the west side one vast sheet of water fully half a mile wide. We had become accustomed to overcoming obstructions and at once sent two men with poles to wade out as far as possible and ascertain the depth of the water. Their report was that the men could wade for nearly half a mile in water from two to five feet deep, when they would reach the channel proper of the creek, which was from sixty to eighty feet wide and very deep, with a swift current. We determined to make a boat from our wagon box by calking the cracks with cotton taken from our comforters and with this (first stretching a rope across the deep water) we could wade the men out to that point and run them across in the wagon box. . . . When we struck the swift current we were carried rapidly down stream, but by using our poles we managed to get across. As we struck the further shore where the bank was steep and a lot of ice piled up, our boat shut up like a jack knife, there being no braces at the corners. Every man jumped for shore and by getting hold of some willows all got out, Mason losing his overcoat and hat, and all getting wet. When the boat, which went under in the collapse, came up it was only separate boards floating down the rapid stream, and the rope was gone. The men who had come

out to hold one end could not stand the cold water longer and had waded back to the main body. We had hoped to stretch this rope across the deep water and ferry over the men.

"About this time the wind suddenly changed to the northwest and was blowing fiercely and very cold, so that our wet clothes began to freeze and stiffen. . . In the face of that blizzard, for such it had now become, we could do nothing. By this time it had grown so dark that nothing could be seen of the other shore, neither on account of the noise of the wind could we get any reply to our frequent calls. We were utterly incapable of further exertion. The howling wind and drifting snow was fast obliterating the track. We consulted together and determined that it was as utterly impossible for us to render any assistance to our men as it would have been had they been in mid-ocean, and that our only safety lay in getting to Shippey's before the darkness and drifting snow made it impossible. It was a terrible walk with our frozen clothes and it was nine o'clock in the evening when we reached the cabin. Here we passed a night which no lapse of time will ever obliterate from my memory, so small was the cabin and so cold, and we had only our wet clothes. We warmed ourselves by the open fire, had some bacon and bread and a cup of coffee—the best thing to revive exhausted nature I have ever found. We had no blankets, but borrowed what the Shippeys could spare from their scanty store and spent the night, some trying to sleep, some drying their clothes by turning first one side to the fire, then the other, all anxious and making frequent visits to the door hoping the storm would abate, but each time only to find the wind and cold increasing. . . I remember that it seemed as if the light of day would never come. The image of each man in the command, out in this terrible night, with neither

food, fire or even the protection of a tent, was constantly before me."[1]

The main part of the force was thus left on the open prairie to face the terrible blizzard. Lieutenant Mason thus describes their experiences: "We were now drenched to the skin and as the wind had shifted to the northwest it rapidly grew cold, and before many minutes our clothes were frozen stiff. We were very scantily dressed—few of the men having more than an undershirt and a pair of pants. I fared as well as any of them, and all I had to brave that fearful storm with, was a flannel shirt, a pair of pants with one leg torn off at the knee and the seam in the other ripped from top to bottom, and one boot with the leg cut off, the mate having been burned a few days previous. We began to look around for a place to sleep. Some of the boys spread their blankets on the ground and arranged themselves 'spoon fashion.' Brizee, Howland, Hathway, and myself lay behind the hind wheels of a wagon. We got through that night, but I hardly know how, as the mercury was over 30° below. We were all glad to see daylight, but many did not dare to crawl out of their blankets that day. The poor boys were almost freezing and some of them were becoming delirious. I think we were all more or less insane during a part of that terrible night. Brizee would frequently put his face to mine and beg me to 'go down the creek, only half a mile, where there was a big hotel, where we could get a warm breakfast with hot coffee.' When I would tell him that it was only a dream he would sob like a child and still insist that we must go. After daylight I fell into a doze, and dreamed that I was at my dear old mother's home, that I had been away and had come home hungry, and that she and a favor-

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[1] Reminiscences of Chas. B. Richards, *Annals of Iowa*, Sept., 1898, pp. 517-520.

ite sister prepared some toast for me. I can see them now as I saw them then.

"The next morning was still and bright. Mr. Howland and myself concluded to cross the creek. We staggered to our frozen feet and arm in arm hobbled toward the stream. All eyes were upon us as we went out upon the ice. We began to feel encouraged but when we neared the center of the creek we found a space of open water, about thirty feet wide and very deep. We had resolved, however, never to return to that camp again, and looking up the stream we saw a clump of willows and went up to them. Here we found that ice had floated down, lodged against the willows and frozen there, thus forming a complete bridge. After passing the channel we signaled back, when a truly joyous shout went up from those poor half-insane boys. I will here state that there was not a man among our number — about 80 — who had strength enough to reach the opposite shore. I do not understand why they were so affected, the trouble seemed to be weakness and a shortness of breath. Every man's mouth was open wide, his tongue hanging out, and in some instances blood running from nose or mouth. Shippey's cabin, where Major Williams, Captains Duncombe and Richards, and Private Smith had been during the storm, was two and a half miles southeast of the creek. Howland and I kept together until we reached the cabin, and were among the last to arrive. He, being the stronger, had rendered me considerable assistance, for which I now, after thirty years, thank him most sincerely. Major Williams met us with great tears streaming down his furrowed cheeks, and those who had remained at the cabin rendered as all the assistance in their power. We soon devoured the provisions given us and all sank down in the warmth of the sun and slept. We were allowed to sleep till about three o'clock P. M., when we were aroused from our slumbers and a consultation

was held. It was decided to disband, separate into small squads, and strike out for the nearest settlement.''[1]

'' All of the command finally arrived safely except Captain Johnson and Wm. Burkholder, who perished in the awful storm not far from the Irish colony, on the west side of the west fork of the Des Moines River. Some of the party, however, received injuries from the exposure on the march from which they never recovered. I have doubts whether any body of men for the same length of time, on any march, ever suffered greater hardships, more constant exposure, more severe bodily labor, than those who composed the Spirit Lake expedition. . . So long as the people of Iowa admire pluck and true courage; so long as Americans are freemen, the story of the Spirit Lake expedition will be told with pride by every true man of our state and by all who are familiar with her history.''[2]

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[1] Recollections of Frank R. Mason, *Annals of Iowa*, Ooctober, 1898, p. 535.

[2] Address of Capt. John F. Duncombe, *Annals of Iowa*, Sept., 1898, pp. 507-8.

CHAPTER VI

New Settlers — 1856-1862

The spring of 1857 was late in coming, but in May the settlers had begun to return to their abandoned homes. New settlers were picking out desirable locations and bringing new vigor and courage into the prairie settlements. As the spring progressed and the pleasant summer weather came, their hope revived and with the prospect of a good crop the settlement again resumed its normal life.

In order to understand the situation in the county at that time, it may be well to go back about a year and describe more fully some of the settlers and their families, who had begun to select locations soon after the first settlements were made. In a prior chapter the origin of the settlement at West Bend in May, 1855, and the experiences of the Carter and Evans families have been recorded. Samuel McClelland, who had come out with the Carters and Evanses on their first trip, had gone back east but returned in the spring of 1856 with his family. He was a son-in-law of Wm. Carter and so located his home on the west branch of the Des Moines River, about three miles north of where Mr. Carter had built his cabin. In July, 1856, John McCormick, Sr., and his son Robert came to this county. As they came west they traveled along the old military road until they came to Mr. Carter's, where they stopped, as it was the only house at that time along the old military road. They spent some time looking at the surrounding country with a view to taking up government land and soon after pre-empted seven quarter sec-

tions on both sides of the river, in what is now Fern Valley township.[1]

An incident is told of these days that illustrates some of the difficulties of pioneer life. John McCormick, Jr., who lived back in New Jersey, wrote to his brother Robert, saying that he would like to have a letter every week. Robert replied from Palo Alto, "The frost has busted my ink bottle and it is fifty miles before I can get another."[2]

Soon after this, R. M. J. McFarland, Sr., and a friend of his named Jason Simmons came to the county from Wisconsin and settled near Mr. Carter. They stayed there that fall and winter, but as the winter was very severe and the conveniences few, they decided that the Palo Alto climate was too rigorous and returned to Wisconsin. There may have been other reasons for Mr. McFarland's not staying in the county, as he was single at the time but was married not long after his return to Wisconsin. Mr. McFarland had pre-empted, in the spring of 1858, the northeast quarter of 28, West Bend township, but a year or so later sold it to Chas. Coyle (father of Judge Daniel F. Coyle of Humboldt) for a yoke of oxen. In 1864 his recollections of the beauties of Palo Alto prompted him to return and he bought back the old place for a span of horses. The difference between the yoke of oxen and the span of horses represents the rise in value of the land during that period. The records do not show this transfer, as Mr. Coyle did not think it worth while to record his deed and when Mr. McFarland re-purchased the land he was simply handed back his unrecorded paper.[3]

This shows in an interesting way the simple methods of transacting business and the slight value attached to the land in those days.

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[1] Letter of Mrs. Ira D. Stone. Mrs. Stone is a daughter of John McCormick, Sr.

[2] Recollections of John McCormick, Jr.

[3] Letter of B. F. McFarland of West Bend.

James Linn came to the county and settled as a member of the West Bend colony in 1856. In the same year he married Elizabeth Carter, daughter of William Carter, and Wm. D. Powers married Ann Carter, the other daughter. These were the first two marriages that took place in Palo Alto County.[1] The members of this settlement thus became very closely bound together and mutually interested in its success and prosperity. Dan Howe lived at this settlement in 1856 and also had a claim further north. It was about this time that Thos. Campbell settled in this county not far from West Bend.

In the fall of 1856, Mrs. John McCormick, Sr., and her son James, and daughter Isabel, started from Newark, N. J., on their long trip to join the rest of the family at West Bend. Mrs. Isabel McCormick Stone, in describing their journey, says: "We reached Iowa City on the 17th of November, 1856. My brother Robert came there a week later with an ox team to convey us to our home near Rodman. While traveling by those slow stages, we were unable to reach our destination on account of streams and the big snow. Added to this, my brother James froze his feet and had to have a portion of his right foot amputated by Dr. Olney of Fort Dodge, when we got there. We were then forced to stop until March with an old lady and her son, named Schaffer, who lived near what is now the Glenn farm, south of Dakotah City, near the forks of the river. This was some time in December, 1856. In March, 1857, we left there and by dint of great struggle reached our home, where John McCormick now lives, on March 9, being on Monday the day after the Indian massacre at Spirit Lake."[2]

In the spring of 1858, John McCormick, Jr., left New

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[1] "Some Reminiscences of a Pioneer," Chas. McCormick in *Palo Alto Reporter,* August, 1906. Statement of A. B. Carter. Letters of Mrs. Ira D. Stone.

[2] Letter of Mrs. Ira D. Stone of West Bend.

Jersey to join the rest of the family at West Bend. After reaching Fort Dodge he started out on foot across the prairie. He describes his experiences as follows: "I only carried a satchel on my shoulders. Left my other stuff at Iowa City. Like the wise virgins, I took oil in my vessel. I had several pair of shoes, carpenter tools, etc., but left them at Iowa City where the railroad ended. When I got to this side of the river, before coming to Billy Miller's, there was Badger Creek, with the water running very swiftly over a stony bottom. It was all I could do to keep my feet. If I had not done so I would have been in Des Moines. They used to keep a ferry there, 'Bull's Ferry' they called it. The bull would swim the river with the people. When I came to Dakotah, they said there were still some white settlers up the river. One man's name was Miller, a little on this side of Rutland, Humboldt County. I stopped with this Miller, this side of Dakotah on the edge of the river. He asked me if I had had anything to eat. It was then getting dark. I said, 'No.' Says he, 'I will fix you something.' He baked some buckwheat cakes. I think they got the buckwheat along with the dirt and ground all up together. I thought, 'You don't need doctors in this country, you are pretty gritty.' I came from there on up to West Bend. The house was built when I got there. There was a little storm-shed around the door. No floor in the house. Poles reached across for joists and small poles across them so they could lay sods over to make the house warm. There was no lumber in the county then. The grass was so high we had to stake out our two cows. If we had not and had let them go, we would never have found them again. Father and my brother cooked the meals on two forked sticks. That was before the house was built. My brother and I batched. Father got a homestead near by. My brother and I lived in this first house, batched it eight years without a floor

in the house, and baked our bread and ate our meals off of a shingle block and got fat. We kept hotel and had plenty of custom. Never charged them anything and never paid any license. Some of my customers wondered how I baked such good bread. We had plenty of good cream, plenty of eggs, made it as rich as we could, and baked it in a Dutch oven.''[1]

In September of 1858, Tom, Charles, and Joe McCormick joined the rest of the family in the new home.[2] The McCormicks were very hospitable people and their cabin was the stopping place for all travelers along the road. They were always willing to share what little they had with all who chanced that way. A very good description of the McCormicks' hospitality in the early days is given by J. N. Prouty as follows: ''In the winter of 1868 and 1869, I undertook to make the trip around the circuit with the then circuit judge, J. M. Snyder, who was an old acquaintance and had studied law in the same office with me. We reached the old McCormick place about sunset. The place looked rather forbidding to me. The house was two log houses set end to end and half buried in a gravel knoll. I think the roof was also of earth or sod, so that there was just enough space between the two earths for little windows with 7 x 9 panes. I objected to stopping there (I was wearing a silk hat at that time but haven't been guilty of it since), but the Judge said it was the best place available. We drove up in front of the house. The Judge got out of the sleigh, went down a sort of hatchway to the door and rapped. A rather large, elderly woman opened the door and they greeted each other very cordially and then the Judge asked if we could stay over night there. She said, 'Oh, yes, we can keep you, but you will have to take care of your horses yourselves, as the men

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[1] Interview with John McCormick.

[2] ''Some Reminiscences of a Pioneer,'' Chas. McCormick.

folks are all gone.' We then drove to the barn, which was about ten rods away and built by setting forked posts or crotches, as they were then called, in the ground, laying poles across, throwing a lot of willow brush on top and standing up other and smaller poles on the sides, and then covering the whole with the desired thickness of prairie hay, leaving a large portion of the south side open for the cattle to go out and in at will. The west end had been enclosed and partitioned off for a horse stable. We unhitched our horses and led them into the stable. It happened that there was a hen's nest in the feed box to which I led one of the horses and in the nest were five eggs. I said to the Judge, 'I don't believe I can eat a mouthful of food in that house tonight. I am hungry. I can suck an egg and I propose that we suck these eggs.' 'All right,' said the Judge. I handed him one and took one myself, broke the shell on the manger and swallowed the contents. The Judge did likewise. We repeated the performance, but when I handed him the fifth egg, he said, 'No, you take that; I can eat in that house.' I took it. We then went out and viewed the stock. There was quite a large herd and among them two tame elk that had been caught when calves and reared with the cattle. The Judge kept saying, 'Let's go in,' but I put it off as long as I could, though the weather was cold. As soon as we went into the house Mrs. McCormick went out and I had a good opportunity to look over the premises. In the middle of the room stood a pine board table covered with as nice a clean, white, linen table cloth as I ever beheld. On the center of the table sat a large plate of buns, baked to a nice brown. On one side of the buns sat a plate of potatoes, cooked with their jackets on, and on the other side was a platter of fried ham. There was also two kinds of fruit, which turned out to be preserved wild crabapples and preserved wild plums.

On the stove sat the tea kettle and the teapot and the skillet in which the ham was fried with the grease still in it. In one corner of the room was a bed (in which we slept that night), with curtains extending from the ceiling to the floor. Presently Mrs. McCormick returned, took the skillet off the stove, turned the grease on to the platter of ham, then took the teapot and began pouring the tea. As she did so, she said, 'Sit up. It's ready. I intended to have some eggs for you to eat with your ham, but something has taken them.' I liked nothing better than fried ham and eggs in those days, but I had stolen my supper and eaten it raw."[1]

Another early settler in what is now Fern Valley township was William Shippey, who built a cabin on the east side of the river, a few miles below where the old trail crossed Cylinder Creek. He came to the county in the spring of 1856, and his cabin was the half-way house between McCormick's and the Irish settlement. For quite a number of years his house stood alone without any neighbors near at hand. Thos. Cahill and Orrin Sylvester were two other settlers who settled across the river a few miles west from Shippey's. In the spring of 1857 the Hickeys, who had spent the winter with the Irish colony, moved across the river to section 35, Emmetsburg township. The Hickey cabin stood on the bank of the river, just across northwest from what is now known as the Burns bridge, where Mrs. Gibbs now lives. In those early days the Hickeys kept a small skiff by means of which they ferried people across the river. Somewhat later there was a bridge, but that was washed out during the spring rains and the ferry boat continued to be the only means of transportation across the river at this point until about 1875 or 1876, when the county bridge was built. When Mr. Hickey

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[1] Letter of J. N. Prouty, Humboldt.

Myles Mahan

was elected county judge he took a prominent part in the organization of the county.[1]

In the spring of 1857, Myles Mahan and his wife Mary Ann, five sons, Miles E., James, John, Patrick, William, and four daughters, Mary, Anna, Maggie, and Esther, came to Palo Alto County and selected a location on the southwest quarter of section 22-97-33, in the edge of the timber near the river. They built a log cabin about 16 x 24, which was a large house for those days, and as many as sixty persons have stayed all night there.[2] They had wagon box beds piled one above the other and these could accommodate a large number. There was no floor in the house, and one little window of one small pane of glass not over 10 x 12. The cellar went down under the bed so as to keep anyone from falling in. There was a root house outside for larger storage, as the inside one was small. The cabin was in the edge of the timber and right where the bluff slopes off to the east rather abruptly. The cabin was then about twenty-five rods from the corner stake of section 22. One night Miles Mahan was taking stock of his provisions and found that all he had was one sack of corn meal. He went to bed with a heavy heart, as it was all he had in the world and no money. He had not yet gone to sleep when a knock was heard and there stood Captain Martin and forty soldiers who were out scouting. The Mahans worked all night feeding and caring for the company and the next morning the meal was gone, but they had $40 in money and felt that they could begin again with new energy the pioneer fight for life. At a later time Captain Martin and a squad of soldiers brought Umposhota and one other Indian on the way to Fort Dodge and then to Des Moines where they were to be hung for having participated in the Spirit Lake massacre. Mrs.

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[1] Those events will be more fully treated in a later chapter.

[2] Interview with M. E. Mahan.

Mahan drew a revolver and was for shooting the Indians on the spot, but the captain begged her not to fire and finally she put up the weapon. That night the Indians, pretending to be sick, went out and started off down the bluffs. The soldiers shot after them, but Mrs. Mahan said to stop shooting and she would get them, and taking the dog with her to track them, started out in full chase. The dog got in a fight with the Indian dog, lost the trail, and the Indians made good their escape. Mrs. Mahan was a type of the fearless frontier woman, who knew no danger and no fear.[1] The Mahan cabin was thirty-five miles from Spirit Lake and the only house this side of Spirit Lake. So all the travel from Spirit Lake to Fort Dodge stopped at Mahan's and it was the refuge for weary sojourners for many years. For twelve years they kept a sort of tavern. J. P. Dolliver stayed there many a night, rolled up in his blanket, and slept on the floor, and always had his dollar to pay for his lodging and breakfast.[2] Myles Mahan was a courageous old man and refused to leave even when the Indian scare was at its height. Once when the Indians were reported as coming, Ned Mahan, who had gone to Laughlins for safety with the other settlers, started out alone with his gun to meet the Indians so as to have a good shot at them. He was also a fearless man. In the sixties Myles built a new house 16 x 24, 12 feet high. This was shingled with oak shingles, and was a better house than the old one. It was considered one of the best houses in Northwestern Iowa. The logs were all scored down to six inches thick and carefully laid. In 1858, Myles Mahan lined up a road from his house north to Spirit Lake. He sharpened willow sticks and set them along in a line to mark the trail. Before that the trail was dim and travelers got lost and couldn't find their way over the vast

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[1] Interview with M. E. Mahan. "Early Days on the West Fork," by Ambrose A. Call, in *Upper Des Moines Republican*, August 15, 1906.

[2] Interview with M. E. Mahan.

prairie, every one making a track of his own around the sloughs and ponds.

Trapping was the salvation of the early settlers. Uncle Ned Mahan made $75 trapping in one day. The sale of furs, etc., was what kept the people supplied with money.

In the fall of 1857, Myles Mahan went up to Mankato, Minn., for groceries and supplies and on the return the oxen, which were dusty and warm from the long trip, saw Spirit Lake and ran away to get in the water and cool off. They were well trained or they would have dumped all that precious load of provisions into the water. As it was they stood until cooled off and then he started them off on the trip home and arrived safely.

Prairie fires were a great menace in those days. The fires traveled over the prairie faster than a horse could run and would jump the river where it was from seventy to one hundred feet wide. Many settlers here lost all their property and barely escaped with their lives in the path of those terrific prairie fires. The grasshoppers were a fearful pest in 1873 and later years. M. E. Mahan remembers rowing down the river to Emmetsburg when the hoppers were a foot thick on the water and more coming over the banks just like a waterfall.[1]

Patrick Nolan was another who settled in the timber along the river not far from the Irish colony in 1857. He was jocularly called "Paddy in the Bush" by the settlers, to distinguish him from two other Patrick Nolans who soon after settled in the county.

William Murphy came to the county in October, 1857, and pre-empted the southwest quarter of 30-96-32 and lived there until he proved up. His log shanty was built near what is known as the John Doran place. Mr. Murphy was a single man and did teaming and other work at Fort Dodge. After helping lay out the ill-fated county-

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[1] Interview with M. E. Mahan, Graettinger.

seat on the bank of Medium Lake in 1858, he that fall returned to Fort Dodge and as times were hard went back east to look for work, and did not return to Palo Alto County and settle permanently until May, 1871.[1]

Michael Jackman and family built a cabin on the east bank of Medium Lake and their hospitable home was well known among the early travelers from the east who passed that way. They became prominent in the later affairs of the county. That old cabin still stands as one of the few remaining landmarks of those early days.

John L. Davis was another settler who came here in 1858 and lived across the river in Great Oak township, where the McCoy farm now is. He had oxen enough so that he could run a large riding breaking plow. This was one of the first riding plows in the county. He would let his wife ride and he would drop corn. He was one of the judges of election in 1859 and it is said that there was some difficulty in that election on account of several people who tried to vote, although they had practically left the county and had simply come back for some of their goods. Mr. Davis as judge of election made them swear in their vote before he would allow them to participate in the election. He only stayed in this county until 1860, when he left and did not return.[2] It was rumored shortly after he left that this man Davis was a horse thief and was a part of the gang that was working this whole part of the country. One of the vigilance committee from this county who was down at Iowa Falls when they rounded up this gang there, reported that Davis was among the number, but that they could not prove anything against him and had to let him go. Years later a cave for horses was discovered in the bank of the river near his place. This band of horse thieves was a notorious affair in 1856 and 1857. They

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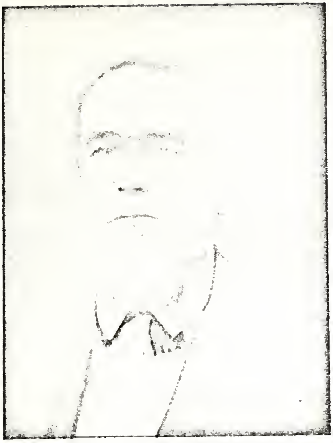
[1] Interview with William Murphy.

[2] Statement M. H. Crowley.



MARTIN COONAN

MRS. CATHERINE COONAN

were well organized and had various rendezvous and stations along the frontier. They became so bold in their depredations and such a menace to the communities that the settlers organized and finally cleaned the band out in 1858. They were rounded up by the sheriff and his posse in Grundy County, and several of them were hung. A number of underground stables were later found and evidences were abundant as to the large territory covered by these transactions. Several of the citizens of Palo Alto County remember this band and their operations very well. They did not molest the settlers here so much, but they were a continual menace to the peace and safety of the people and the early settlers were very glad when these desperadoes were finally rounded up.[1]

William Reed and family lived near the Davis place. He had two sons, and one winter they got lost and were out all night and one of the boys froze his foot so badly that it had to be taken off. A trapper by the name of Ward Whitman stayed with them one winter and made quite a large catch.

Martin Coonan and Catherine his wife, and five boys, bought a farm on the bank of the river half a mile south of the Irish colony. They moved on to their land in 1858, built a cabin and began the work of clearing up the timber and preparing for a permanent home. This land is now known as " Riverdale " farm. The important events that transpired at this historic spot will be more fully treated in a later chapter.[2]

Another new settler was James McCosker, who was elected the first county surveyor in 1858. He did not, however, remain long in the county. John L. Davis was

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[1] Statements by A. B. Carter, M. H. Crowley, M. E. Mahan and others. For evidence that this gang operated over a wide territory in Iowa, see "Chronological History of Cedar Rapids," *Cedar Rapids Republican*, June, 1906. Gue's *History of Iowa*, vol. i, chap. xxvii.

[2] Chapter xi.

the second surveyor to be elected, as he was chosen at the election of the following year.

"Tom Tobin, his father, mother, and sister Alice, and Joe and Kern Mulroney came in the year 1857 and old Mrs. Mulroney and Maggie came one year later. The Sheas, Coonans, Pendergasts, I think, came in the spring of 1858."[1]

Among the other settlers who came to this part of the county about this time were: Thomas Maher, William Maher, Daniel Kane, Thomas Downey, Thomas Dawson and Patrick Lynch. All of these settlers had settled in the county by 1860.

In the first few years of settlement in the county the task of threshing the grain was a difficult one. One of the ways devised by Martin Coonan was quite generally used. The bundles of grain would be laid on the ground in a large circle and then a horse would be led around on the circle of bundles and thus stamp out the grain on the ground and his hoofs would grind up the straw much as a modern threshing machine. They would then gather up the grain and holding it up in the air let it fall on to a sheet on a windy day when the breeze would blow the chaff and dirt out of the grain. It was hard work, but the wheat and oats and small crops of other grains were very precious in those days with the market so far away and grain and feed of all kinds so very scarce.[2]

"Palo Alto got its first mail service in 1858. The first trip from Algona to Spirit Lake started July 1st that year. The first postoffice was at Jack Nolan's, Mr. Nolan being the postmaster. It was called Emmetsburg. When routes were established from Fort Dodge to Spirit Lake, and Fort Dodge to Jackson, a postoffice was established

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[1] "Some Reminiscences of a Pioneer," by Chas. McCormick, *Reporter*, August 2, 1906. See also same article, Semi-Centennial Record, pp. 389-90.

[2] Recollections of Martin Coonan, Jr.

at Mulroney's, called Soda Bar, with Mulroney as Nasby, and one at McCormick's on the east side, called Fern Valley, Thomas McCormick postmaster, and Nolan's office was moved over on the river and Martin Coonan made postmaster. There never was a postoffice in the county called Paoli."[1] When the postoffice was first established at Nolan's, the mail which came once a week was put in a big milk pan and the settlers would come over on Sunday afternoons and pick out their own mail from the pan.[2] This practice also served as a social feature, as the various families thus came together at a common center to visit and talk over events transpiring in the local community as well as the news from the outside world.

The settlers in the county very early began to inaugurate some needed improvements. Schools were organized, religious services were held, better houses were being built, and social intercourse encouraged.

In the summer of 1861, J. P. White taught school in a cabin in Walnut township. This was the first school taught in the county. M. H. Crowley still has in his possession a McGuffey's speller with his name and the date showing that it is the book that he used at that first term of school. School books were procured from Fort Dodge and the old settlers say the books they used in those days were the same recognized authorities and that there was no trouble about different kinds of books or new editions. They were always the same; and reading, writing and arithmetic, with some geography, was the invariable course of study.[3]

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[1] "Early Days on the West Fork," by Ambrose A. Call, in the *Algona Upper Des Moines Republican*, August 15, 1906. The above facts are verified by statements of M. H. Crowley, Chas. Nolan, Lott Laughlin, and others.

[2] Statement of Chas. Nolan.

[3] Statement of M. H. Crowley, supplemented by the recollections of many others.

A little later in the same year a log school house was built at West Bend, Mr. Carter hauling the finishing lumber from Boone. Mary E. Mathews of Irvington, Kossuth County, was the teacher.[1]

" The first religious service held in the county was by Father Marsh of the Catholic church, in the year 1859 or 1860. Father McComb, a Presbyterian minister, held the first Protestant service in the summer of 1860. This service was held in my father's cabin in Fern Valley township. A Presbyterian church was organized and services held at my father's house. Services were also held at Carter's, at old West Bend, at McKnight's Point, and at Powhattan in Pocahontas County. The Struthers, Hendersons, Frazers and others joined this little body of church-going people, among whom were Seth Sharp, Percy Nowhan, James and John Jolliffe, and Abel Hais, and they all did their best to sustain this little Presbyterian church. The church survived, though at times it was nip and tuck, but in the end all came out right."[2]

In the early sixties a postoffice was established at Tobin's called " Soda Bar." This was on the route of the weekly mail service from the south and was very convenient for the settlers there. Tom Tobin was the first postmaster, but his sister Alice (who later married Thomas Kirby) was the real postmistress for several years.

About the same time a postoffice was established at Hickey's across the river, called " Great Oak." There were several large oak trees standing in the Hickey yard and this gave the name to the postoffice, and later the same name was given to the township when it was organized.

A lull in settlement occurred in 1861 and 1862. The difficulty in getting land titles and the distractions of the

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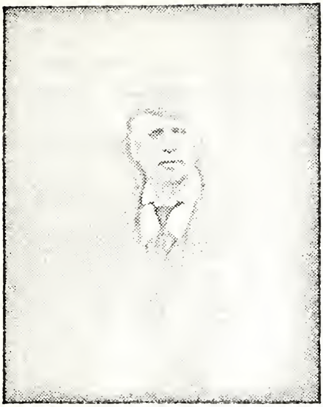
[1] Statement of A. B. Carter. Mr. Carter was the school director who hired this teacher and he remembers distinctly that this school started a short time after the school in Walnut township.

[2] " Some Reminiscences of a Pioneer," by Chas. McCormick.



THOS. TOBIN

J. L. MARTIN

war prevented the further growth of the county for a time. This period of growth came to an end, but it was only a short time before a new line of development opened up for the county enlarged opportunities for progress.

CHAPTER VII

Early Speculative County-seats

Visions of riches made over night has always been the dream of the county-seat promoter. If he could only locate a town that would become the county-seat, his fortune would be made. But many a well laid scheme turned out to be only a bubble. The western country in the early days was full of such "stake-towns" and towns on paper. Palo Alto was no exception to the rule, and the story of the early attempts to locate a county-seat presents an interesting chapter in our history.

As early as 1858 three Fort Dodge speculators, Hoolihan, Cahill, and Cavenaugh by name, came up to Palo Alto County. They brought a surveyor with them and made extensive plans for laying out a town. William Murphy, then a young man who had come to this county in October, 1857, and pre-empted a claim (southwest quarter of section 30-96-32), and was living there for the purpose of proving up, and was also doing teaming from Fort Dodge, was employed to assist in laying out the town. A site was selected on the west bank of Medium Lake at its southern extremity, where Call's addition to our present county-seat is now platted. This was but a mile and a quarter from the log cabin of Martin Coonan, on the east bank of the Des Moines River, at the place which is now known as the Riverdale farm.

These parties surveyed and staked out a town and then proceeded to build a log court house, store, and blacksmith shop. As yet the town was without a name, but one day when the buildings were well under way the four were

talking the question over. Hoolihan, who was a very well educated man and an enthusiastic champion of the cause of the oppressed Irish, suggested that they name the town after Robert Emmet, the fearless Irish patriot, of whom he was a great admirer. In order to distinguish it from Emmet County, the name "Emmetsburg" was finally agreed upon, and the four men returned to their work, full of hope for the future which was to see their town of Emmetsburg the metropolis of Palo Alto County. Their dreams were in fact realized many years later, but they did not reap the benefit, and it was only after many temporary expedients and many vicissitudes that Emmetsburg became the thriving county-seat that it now is. But alas for their hopes! Their money gave out and they were obliged to abandon the enterprise and return to Fort Dodge.

This town was therefore never officially platted, or filed for record. The buildings stood for some time, until they were probably hauled away by someone who, no doubt, considered that he needed the logs a great deal more than did the stakes in the abandoned town. Although the venture was a financial failure and disappointing to the high hopes of its promoters, yet the name "Emmetsburg" clung to the stake-town, and persisted through the vicissitudes of fortune until it was finally preserved to posterity and became an important factor in our county's history.[1]

In 1859 another attempt was made to establish a county-seat. John M. Stockdale, representing a syndicate of speculators from Fort Dodge, bought up the swamp land of the county in payment for which he agreed to build a court house and school house. He was an influential man, besides being on the inside of state politics,[2] so he easily

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[1] This description follows the facts as given by Wm. Murphy, who remembers them distinctly, and he is corroborated by others.

[2] Stockdale was a cousin of Samuel J. Kirkwood, governor of the state in 1860.

secured the appointment of county-seat commissioners favorable to him.[1] Accordingly Judge C. J. McFarland, district judge of the 5th Judicial District of Iowa, appointed Cyrus C. Carpenter of Webster County, John Straight of Pocahontas County, and William Pollock of Webster County, to locate the county-seat of Palo Alto County. On January 3, 1859, they located it on the north half of section No. 6, in township No. 95 north, range No. 32 west of the 5th P. M., on the town plat of Paoli. This was a town on paper, supposed to be located on what is now known as the Dooley, or Consigny, farm, two miles south of Emmetsburg. It was here that Stockdale had procured control of the land and proposed to build the county-seat as a nucleus for a thriving city.

In accordance with his contract with the county, Stockdale began to build a brick court house and school house at Paoli, but the work dragged along and when completed the court house fell down and was rebuilt one-half as large as the original specifications called for. Considerable litigation resulted over this, but was finally compromised.

Somehow the new town did not prove attractive. Court was held there for a time, but the judge and others in attendance had to go several miles away to the nearest settler for their meals and lodging, and so the bleak old court house was finally abandoned for more comfortable quarters and soon fell into decay. The time had proved inauspicious for the founding of a town, the surrounding territory was not sufficiently settled to make a town necessary, and the plans of the promoters of the county-seat failed utterly.

Thus the county lost the money they put into the public buildings and the speculators failed to realize their anticipated profits. The town of Paoli never was more than a

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[1] See sketch of "Early Days on the West Fork," by Ambrose A. Call in *Algona Upper Des Moines*, August 15, 1906.

possibility. The frost finally cracked the walls of the old court house so badly that "the settlers considering it dangerous to their stock which congregated inside to fight away the flies, made a bee and tore it down."[1] Later the bricks were hauled away and a few years afterward no trace remained on the prairie of the once loudly heralded town of Paoli, the county-seat of Palo Alto County.

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[1] "Early Days on the West Fork," by Ambrose A. Call.

CHAPTER VIII

The Political Organization of the County

No community of people can long exist without the formation of some sort of local government. That " man is by nature a political animal " is as true in our age as in the time of Aristotle. The early settlers in various parts of Iowa felt that the territorial or state government was too remote or too inefficient to help them, so they formed " claim clubs " to protect their lands from claim jumpers and their homes from frontier violence,[1] and these same clubs were the first law and order organizations in the new country.

The early settlers of Palo Alto County began to feel the need of a county organization, soon after they had become permanently settled in their new home. That portion of Northwestern Iowa had been a part of the original Fayette County established in 1837 by the Territorial Legislature of Wisconsin, and after Iowa Territory was formed was continued under the name until 1847.[2]

The 3rd General Assembly of the State of Iowa passed an act establishing forty-nine new counties, this act having been approved January 15, 1851.[3] Palo Alto County was in the list and the boundaries then imposed have ever since remained unchanged. The events of the Mexican

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[1] See the author's "Early Social and Religious Experiments in Iowa," in the January, 1902, number of *Iowa Historical Record*, and works there cited.

[2] *Journal Wisconsin Territorial Legislature.* See also an excellent series of articles on the establishment and boundaries of the Iowa counties, by Prof. Frank H. Garver, *Iowa Journal of History and Politics*, July, 1908, January, 1909, and July, 1909.

[3] *Laws of Iowa*, 1850-51, p. 27.

War were still fresh in the minds of the legislators, and they named this county after the memorable battle of Palo Alto.[1]

The northwest part of the state was, however, still unsettled, and so for governmental purposes the county of Palo Alto was attached to Boone County in 1853.[2] In 1855 it was attached to Webster County "for election, judicial and revenue purposes."[3] It thus remained as a part of Webster County until a separate county organization was established in 1858. This was an uncertain and unsatisfactory arrangement for the early settlers of the county, and gave rise to much inconvenience and some litigation. One case over a land title was carried to the Supreme Court, which decided that a conveyance of lands in Palo Alto County made in the year 1857 was properly recorded in Webster County, and that such record was constructive notice to a subsequent purchaser after the organization of Palo Alto County.[4] It is easy to see what a continuing train of difficulties would follow such dual allegiance, as well as the trouble incident to traveling such a distance to the county-seat.

In 1858 the settlers took definite steps towards organizing a county government. An election was held October 2, 1858, but as the necessary preliminaries had not been taken, it proved illegal. The settlers then drew up a petition and sent it to Fort Dodge. Luther L. Pease, then county judge of Webster County, granted the petition, and called an election to be held Dec. 20, 1858. This was the first regular election held in Palo Alto County. James Hickey and James Nolan were the election judges and the voting was done at Thomas Downey's cabin for the north-

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[1] The battle of Palo Alto was the first decisive victory of the Americans in Mexico, May 8, 1846.

[2] Acts 3rd General Assembly, *Laws of Iowa*, 1853.

[3] Acts 5th General Assembly, *Laws of Iowa*, 1855, chap. 142.

[4] Meagher vs. Drury, 89 Iowa, 366.

ern settlers and at Wm. Carter's cabin for the settlers in the southeast of the county. All the settlers in the county were Democrats, but the campaign was spirited on personal issues and soon developed a factional fight. The Hickeys and Nolans became bitter rivals. Ed Mahan went down to West Bend to work for James Nolan and Elias Downey for James Hickey. The Carter colony people all voted for Hickey, while the McCormicks voted for Nolan. This alignment turned the tide in favor of the "Hickey party" and elected their entire ticket.[1]

The canvass of the election board showed that there were 44 votes cast with the following result:

County Judge — James Hickey 27, James Nolan 17.

Clerk District Court — Felix McCosker 27, Martin Coonan 17.

Treasurer and Recorder — John Mulroney 27, Martin Laughlin 17.

Drainage Commissioner — John Shea 27, Robert Shippey 17.

County Surveyor — James McCosker 27, James Shippey 17.

Coroner — Orrin Sylvester 23, Jerry Crowley 17.

Sheriff — Thomas H. Tobin 28.[2]

All of these officials were elected for the term of one year. It is noticeable that all the candidates were from the Irish colony or near by and that the south part of the county was not represented among the county officers. The county appears to have been divided into two districts, Palo Alto township and Cylinder township, and as there were two voting places this division was at first evidently

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[1] These facts as to this first election were given me by James Hickey, and A. B. Carter. The memory of each is marvelously clear as to dates and events of the early county organization in which they took such prominent parts. See also Register of Elections, vol. i, county auditor's office.

[2] Register of Elections, vol. i, pp. 8 and 9; office of county auditor, Palo Alto County, Iowa.

for election purposes, as well as for administrative convenience.[1]

In addition to the county officers, the following local officials were elected at the same time:

Joseph T. Mulroney and John Nolan were elected constables, and Lott Laughlin township clerk, for Palo Alto township for one year.

Samuel McClelland was elected constable and township trustee, and Wm. D. Powers clerk for Cylinder township for one year.

James McCormick and Wm. D. Powers were elected justices of the peace for Cylinder township for two years, and Thomas H. Tobin and John Pendergast were elected justices of the peace for Palo Alto township for two years.[2]

Thus the new county was provided with a full set of officers. The county judge was the most important of these, as at that time the county judge was the executive, legislative and judicial branches of the county combined. He performed all the duties that are now discharged by the board of supervisors, had powers now exercised by the district court in its probate and county jurisdiction.[3] besides having most of the duties now performed by the county auditor and county attorney. As the local court, he had extensive judicial powers, he made all contracts, and controlled the affairs of the county; as financial head, he levied the taxes and controlled their collection, and he alone had power to expend the county funds. He also had custody and control of all county property and had large powers as to submitting questions to vote and calling elections. The county judge, in short, controlled absolutely

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[1] There is no official record of such division or the boundaries of these two townships, but the Register of Elections, vol. i, p. 4, shows certificate of election of justices of the peace, township clerks and other officers, Dec. 20, 1858, for both "Palo Alto Precinct" and "Cylinder Precinct."

[2] Register of Elections, vol. i, pp. 3 and 4; auditor's office.

[3] *Code*, 1851, chap. xv.

the general policy of the county and was in a position to be an absolute dictator. Such concentration of power in the hands of one man may have been conducive to efficiency, but it was a dangerous tendency. It was an unusual system of local government introduced in Iowa by the Code of 1851 and lasted until 1860 when a board of supervisors was provided to take over the administrative powers.[1]

With such broad and absolute powers we can readily see that much would depend upon the character of the man elected to the office of county judge. If he were extravagant or arbitrary or dishonest, he could do incalculable harm to the county and its people. On the other hand, if honest and able, he would be in a position of authority that would do much to guide and encourage a healthy development of the community.

James Hickey was the man selected by the settlers of our county as the first county judge. It was a position of honor and power and so well did Judge Hickey perform the duties of the office that he was re-elected and served until 1861. He was a competent official and kept the records in good order and was fair and impartial in dispensing frontier justice.[2]

The other officers were sworn in before Judge Hickey and were ready to perform the duties of their offices. De-

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[1] *Laws of Iowa*, 1860, chap. xlvi; 46; Revision 1860, sec. 303.

[2] In a personal letter to the author under date of July 6, 1906, the late Charles Aldrich, founder of the Historical Department of Iowa, said: "In the summer of 1858 Cyrus C. Carpenter, afterwards governor of the state, and I journeyed together to Spirit Lake. I was going there on a matter of business, and my young friend Carpenter went with me to show me the way, as the road for the most part was but a dim trail. We were six or eight days on this expedition. In Palo Alto County we stayed all night with Judge Hickey, who lived in a log cabin. I remember that the Irish family were a people of very considerable intelligence. They were certainly very hospitable and ministered to us as far as their resources permitted. In those days I traveled considerably through Northwestern Iowa, staying with the settlers whenever night overtook me, but I have today no pleasanter recollections of entertainment than those connected with the home of James Hickey."

cember 29th Judge Hickey ordered the books for county records and Thos. Maher was allowed $15.00 for hauling the books, papers, seals, etc., from Fort Dodge.[1] We can imagine that these frontier officials did not find their duties burdensome, and that each officer found ample room in his own cabin for the records of his office, during these early days.

The county had no sooner been organized than C. J. McFarland, judge of the 5th Judicial District of Iowa, appointed Cyrus C. Carpenter of Webster County, John C. Straight of Pocahontas County, and William P. Pollock of Webster County, to locate the county-seat of Palo Alto County. The instructions to the commissioners were " to locate said county-seat as near the geographical center as may be, having due regard for the present as well as the future population of said county."[2] In accordance with these instructions the commissioners met and on January 3, 1859, they located the county-seat on the north half of section 6, township 95, range 32, on the town plat of Paoli.[3] This was the visionary county-seat whose history has already been recorded in the last chapter.

On December 29, 1858, James Hickey, county judge, having previously advertised for bids, entered into a contract with Andrew Hood of Webster County, the lowest bidder, by the terms of which Hood was to select and survey the swamp and overflowed lands of the county, and make full maps and plats of same. He was to receive four and one-half cents per acre therefor, payable in bonds of the county on certain terms prescribed in said contract.[4]

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[1] Minute Record, Palo Alto County, vol i, p. 5, auditor's office. This record book was thus designated until the Board of Supervisors took charge. Thereafter the same book was used and known as Minute and Supervisors' Record of Palo Alto County, vol. i.

[2] Minute Record, Palo Alto County, vol. i, p. 1.

[3] Minute Record, Palo Alto County, vol. i, p. 2.

[4] Minute Record, Palo Alto County, vol. i, p. 11. The record is also supplemented by statements of Judge Hickey.

Accordingly Mr. Hood proceeded to select, classify and survey the so-called swamp land of the county.

Under the law of the state at that time, these swamp lands could be sold and the proceeds used by the county for erecting public buildings. In order that the county might have a court house and other public improvements, Judge Hickey entered into a contract with William E. Clark of Baltimore, Md., to build a court house and school house at Paoli and two county bridges across the river, in return for which the county was to deed him the swamp lands.[1]

The contract with regard to the court house called for a brick building, 36 x 50, two stories in height, of very plain construction, using brick made in the vicinity. It was to be heated by stoves. The building was to be divided by partitions on the first floor into a hall and four offices for the county officers. Above was the court room furnished with "seating made of good planks oiled and varnished."

The school house was to be a one-story structure, built of brick, 20 x 24 feet in size, with twelve-light windows. The contract also covered two county bridges over the river, one near section 7-95-32, and the other near section 21-94-31.

Judge Hickey on December 19, 1859, issued a proclamation calling a special election, in accordance with the provisions of sections 114 and 115 of the code of 1851 and acts subsequent thereto, to determine whether or not the county would approve of deeding the swamp lands to build public improvements.[2] It was the general custom among the counties in the northern part of the state to do this, as it would provide adequate public buildings and other improvements without the necessity of bonding the county or saddling a heavy debt upon the people who were not able

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[1] Minute Record, Palo Alto County, vol. i, pp. 25-40.

[2] Minute Record, Palo Alto County, vol. i, pp. 35-40.

in those times to bear any such burden. The vote was therefore favorable and approved the contract.[1] This contract was assigned to John M. Stockdale, who was the real party in interest, but who did not want his name connected with these matters at first.

The contractor began work, but as labor was scarce there was considerable delay, and an extension of time was finally granted.[2] The court house was poorly built and when almost completed it fell down, and was rebuilt one-half as large as the original specifications called for. Court was held in this court house for a year or two, the judge, lawyers, court officers, jurors, and witnesses going two or three miles to the nearby settlers for their meals and night's lodging, as there was nothing but a school house at Paoli besides the court house. But the lone court house with scarcely any furnishings, was bleak and dreary at best, and one cold winter day, when the old cracked stove refused to heat and the clerk said his fingers were too cold to write in his docket, the judge ordered the sheriff to find new accommodations for the court, and thereafter court was held in a more comfortable house wherever convenient and the old brick court house fell into decay.

It was unfortunate that the site chosen for the county-seat did not prove permanent, as the county in fact got little use out of the public buildings, paid for by land which then was of little value, but now is being drained and made into valuable property. It is a curious example of the perversity of fate.

Before we pass on, the following verbatim copy of specifications for a bridge, which was contracted for in December, 1859, for the road crossing Silver Creek, may perhaps prove of interest to those wishing to know something about pioneer bridge building:

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[1] See chapter vii.

[2] Minute Record, Palo Alto County, vol. i, p. 58.

"Specifications — The bridge is to be 19 feet long, inside of sills, the stringers 4 in number, to be each 23 feet long of good sound logs, dressed on the upper side so as to allow the floor to lay flat upon them. The width of the bridge to be 16 feet and the flooring of the same to be of two sets of split puncheon, each puncheon to be pinned down with ½-inch pins on two stringers, the pins to be drove so that their points shall converge. The abutments are to be of height sufficient to bring the floor to the level of pins drove in each end of the bridge. And the ground on each end of the bridge to be filled up so as to bring the roadway to the same level as the bridge."[1]

The appointive power of the county judge was called into use several times during the year 1859. The county clerk elect, Felix McCosker, having left the county and failed to qualify, Judge Hickey on January 8, 1859, appointed Thomas Maher in his place.[2] Mr. Maher qualified and held office until he resigned shortly before the election of 1859, and Michael O. Hickey was appointed as clerk until the time of the election.[3] On July 1, 1859, Andrew Hood was appointed county surveyor.[4]

On the first Monday in May, 1859, the record shows that Judge Hickey appointed Michael Mahan assessor of "Palo Alto township."[5] This act is of considerable significance, as it indicates the development of the local government. The assessor is the first local officer who comes into close touch with all the people of the community. It is the first step in the levying and collecting of taxes, and thus is one of the important elements in self-government.

On October 11, 1859, occurred the first state election in which the settlers of the county had been privileged to

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[1] Minute Record, Palo Alto County, vol. i, p. 20, auditor's office.

[2] Register of Elections, vol. i, page 2; statement of Judge Hickey.

[3] Register of Elections, vol. i, p. 10.

[4] Register of Elections, vol. i, p. 10.

[5] Register of Elections, vol. i, p. 10.

participate. Forty-seven votes were polled in the county, three more votes than in the previous year. It was the first opportunity for the party affiliation of the settlers to assert itself and the result was decisive. The three new comers since the last election cast the only Republican votes.[1]

The Democratic candidate for governor, Augustus C. Dodge, received 44 votes, and Samuel J. Kirkwood, the Republican, three votes. The other state officers received about the same vote. For senator, John F. Duncombe received 45 votes and L. L. Pease 2 votes. For representative, F. M. Corey 32, John E. Blackford 15.[2]

The result of the vote for county officers was as follows:

	PALO ALTO	CYLINDER	TOTAL
County Judge—			
James Hickey	12	14	26
Martin Coonan	20	1	21
Treasurer and Recorder—			
John M. Mulroney	15	14	29
Washington Reed	17	1	18
Clerk of District Court—			
Thos. McCormick	12	14	26
Ward B. Whitman	19		19
Sheriff—			
James McCormick	12	14	26
James Nolan	20	1	21
Coroner—			
R. F. Carter	11	14	25
J. Crowley	20	1	21

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[1] Judge Hickey states positively that there were none but Democrats in the county at the first election and that the three new settlers cast the three Republican votes in 1859. I have found no other settler who disputes this fact. The McCormicks who came the previous fall, are said to have been the first Republicans.

[2] Register of Elections, vol. i, pp. 11-14.

	Palo Alto	Cylinder	Total
Drainage Commissioner—			
Joseph T. Mulroney	12	14	26
Martin Laughlin	20	1	21
County Surveyor—			
John L. Davis	12	14	26
John Shippey	20	1	21

Michael Hickey, Acting County Judge; Wm. D. Powers, Justice of the Peace; James McCormick, Justice of the Peace — County Canvassers.

Certified by James Hickey, County Judge.[1]

The election was in fact very uneventful as far as can be learned, and the only diversion appeared to be the friendly rivalry for the local offices. It is to be noticed that the Carters and McCormicks from the south part of the county now appear as strong factors in the result.

Little of interest transpired in the county during the year following and the records show that there was very little county business. Several vacancies in the county offices were filled by Judge Hickey. December 24, 1859, A. B. Carter was duly appointed sheriff of the county, and Michael Hickey was duly appointed county surveyor April 2, 1860.

As the fall of 1860 rolled around, the county entered upon its first presidential campaign. The bitter fight that was being waged in some parts of the country was not felt in Palo Alto County. While our settlers were far from the settled parts of the country and thus not in the thick of the great national campaign of that year, yet by visits to Fort Dodge and other points, and from newspapers and new arrivals, they kept posted as to what was transpiring. The fact that our settlers were almost all Democrats and fighting Democrats at that, did not tend to encourage the two or three loyal adherents of Lincoln, nor promote an open

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[1] Register of Elections, vol. i.

campaign of any warmth. But the interest in the election was genuine, and when the votes were counted it was found that the Stephen A. Douglas electors had received 29 votes and Abraham Lincoln 4 votes. The new party members rejoiced in the gain of one vote over the preceding election. The total vote of only 33 was so light as to show that the vote of the county was not out. The following county officers were elected: Lott Laughlin, clerk of the district court; John Mulroney, treasurer and recorder; James Nolan, surveyor; Martin Coonan, sheriff; John Nolan, justice of the peace; Michael Graham, constable.

The county of Palo Alto by 1861 had established a regular county government that was working smoothly and efficiently. The settlers had become familiar with the duties of the various offices, and the elections were conducted in a manner that would do credit to an old established community. Although crude in many ways, the political organization of the county at this time was firmly established on a working basis. But events of another nature were looming up dark on the horizon and we must turn for a time to the consideration of other matters.

CHAPTER IX

The Call to Arms

The great question of slavery, smoldering for years in a divided nation, had been kept confined by a series of compromises. But compromise was becoming more and more difficult to maintain and in 1860 completely broke down. The fire so long repressed burst forth with renewed fury. The South, not stopping to consider the cost, not realizing their lack of numbers and their industrial and commercial inferiority as compared with the larger North, defiantly forced the issue and determined to separate from the Union and form a country of their own that would protect the institution of slavery. But this course was fatal to the Southern cause. Secession was a blow at the Union and the North rallied to its support with a patriotism that never could have been aroused for the suppression of slavery alone. "The Union Forever" became a rallying cry and the boys in blue, fighting for the Union, were more than a match for the gallant boys in gray.

Even on the frontier plains of Iowa, the news of the great conflict was eagerly discussed. The pioneers were loyal and when the call for volunteers came they responded nobly. The names of the brave boys who went to the front are spread upon the honor roll in the history of the state of Iowa.

Palo Alto County, although almost on the outpost of civilization, came forward with her quota of loyal sons, and throughout the war contributed as strength permitted to the call of duty. The population of the whole county in

1860 was only 132, a large number of these being women and children and men too old for military service. The percentage enlisting in the Civil War and in the northern Border Brigade was therefore very large, considering the needs and dangers of frontier settlements.

A. B. Carter of West Bend was the first to enlist from this county. He went to Fort Dodge and enlisted August 2, 1861. A company was formed there of young men who were desirous of getting into active service as soon as possible, and when opportunity offered they joined Colonel Harvey's regiment of Pennsylvanians. They reached Washington October 6, 1861, and were given the place of honor as Company A, Eleventh Pennsylvania Cavalry. This western company saw active service, during the entire period of its enlistment, in the eastern army, and was a credit to Iowa throughout the war.[1]

In 1862, James Linn and Wm. D. Powers enlisted in Company I, 32d Iowa Volunteer Infantry. This regiment was in active service until it was mustered out in June, 1865. It was this gallant regiment that bore the brunt of the Confederate charge at the battle of Pleasant Hill, and though losing half of their men in the deadly battle, fought gallantly against heavy odds and turned certain defeat into victory.[2]

Joseph McCormick enlisted in 1863 and went to the front. This gallant soldier met his death at Memphis, Tenn., and was buried in the National Cemetery.

The county desiring to keep its quota full, hired two substitutes, paying them in advance in county warrants at 30c on the dollar, amounting to $2,600.00. The supervisors also ordered that $10,000.00 in warrants be drawn "if needed to raise volunteers provided they can be pro-

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[1] Letter of A. B. Carter. Gue, *History of Iowa*, vol. ii, p. 411.

[2] Gue, *History of Iowa*, vol. ii, pages 319-23. A summary of the service of the 32d Iowa will be found in the same chapter quoted above.

cured."[1] The zeal and patriotism of the county outstripped the necessity, as this was one more than the quota called for. The two substitutes were supplied, however, and the warrants were later redeemed at par, so the county paid well for this service.

But while the war was being waged in the Southland, a different danger threatened the settlers on the northern borders of Iowa. The news of the Sioux outbreak in Minnesota, under the leadership of Little Crow, in the fall of 1862, brought again the haunting fear of the savage red man.[2] In August of that year the warlike Sioux started on a murderous journey through Minnesota, working south until they arrived at New Ulm, where the terrified people had hastily gathered and raised a barricade for protection. The Indians, 500 strong, attacked the town. The prompt arrival of reënforcements alone prevented a general massacre, as the Indians were only beaten off after two days' desperate fighting. The redskins withdrew and continued their depredations on scattered settlements.

The settlers fled in terror to the towns for protection, and as the news traveled onward the people in the border counties of Iowa became alarmed. Public meetings were held at Algona and Estherville and volunteer companies formed.

Governor Kirkwood promptly took steps to raise forces for the protection of the border. He ordered S. R. Ingham of Des Moines to proceed to Fort Dodge and other points and organize a sufficient force, placing arms and ammuni-

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[1] Minutes and Supervisors' Record, no. 1, p. 68, Jan. 2, 1865.

[2] The facts concerning the Indian uprising and the organizing of the frontier forces are condensed from an interesting and accurate article, "The Iowa Northern Border Brigade of 1862-3," by Capt. Wm. H. Ingham, in *Annals of Iowa*, October, 1902, pp. 481-523. That description is fully substantiated by the recollections of Lott Laughlin, Jeremiah Crowley, and others.

tion and the power of the state at his disposal. At Algona he authorized Mr. W. H. Ingham to enlist forty men to be furnished by Humboldt, Palo Alto, Kossuth and Emmet counties. This company was quickly recruited and organized as Company A, with W. H. Ingham of Algona as captain. The following men enlisted from Palo Alto County, their age, residence and nativity being given in the official roster as follows: R. Fayette Carter, 31, Paoli, Palo Alto, Ohio, 2nd Sergeant; Jeremiah Crowley, 18, Emmetsburg, Palo Alto, Ireland; Patrick Jackman, 22, Emmetsburg, Palo Alto, Ireland; Lott Laughlin, 23, Emmetsburg, Palo Alto, Ireland; Keiran Mulroney, 19, Emmetsburg, Palo Alto, Ireland; Joseph T. Mulroney, 26, Emmetsburg, Palo Alto, Ireland.[1]

Twenty men from this company were stationed at Estherville under the command of Lieut. Coverdale and the other twenty were ordered to Iowa Lake under Lieut. McKnight. Later the whole of Company A was located at Estherville under Captain Ingham, and spent the fall and winter in building a stockade fort and preparing suitable quarters.

Four other companies were raised and stationed along the northern border, forming a complete chain of outposts. Guns and ammunition were distributed to the settlers in the various counties. The report to the governor shows among the list the following: "To Martin Coonan for the use of settlers in Palo Alto County; five lbs. powder, 10 lbs. lead, 300 percussion caps." The troops were well drilled and well supplied with the necessary equipment.

These prompt and efficient measures had the desired effect and the Indians were turned to the northward, and

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[1] "Iowa Northern Border Brigade," *Annals of Iowa*, October, 1902, pp. 513-4.

did not molest any settlers in Iowa. Gradually confidence returned, and with the added security of the stockades all ready for an emergency, the troops were mustered out in the summer and fall of 1863.

Although Palo Alto County was not on the extreme border, it was near enough to share the anxiety and fear of the time. The Spirit Lake massacre of 1857 was still fresh in mind and the remembrance of those horrors so near their settlements made them prompt in their assistance for the defense of the border from Indian invasion.

Capt. W. H. Ingham thus sums up the results: "As to the services of the Northern Border Brigade, the results show that it served an excellent purpose in preserving the settlements of the northwestern border and thereby prevented much suffering and an immense loss of property to the citizens of the state. From the reports heretofore given, it will be seen that the brigade promptly met and carried out all of the objects set forth in Governor Kirkwood's General Orders No. 1. By a wise distribution of its forces at frequent stations on the frontier, and under the able management of Col. Sawyers, the brigade undoubtedly did much in preventing the Indians from invading the state. The companies comprising the brigade constructed works at the different posts well suited for the purposes for which they were made, as shown by Col. Sawyers's final reports. These works, together with the presence of the troops, gave a genuine feeling of security not only to the settlers nearby but to all others that were in any way concerned, so that many who had left their homes during the excitement soon afterward returned. The brigade was made up of strong, earnest, loyal men, well fitted by pioneer experiences to meet any emergency that might occur, and its survivors may well take pride in having been members and of helping to render the last service

ever required by the state for protection of its northern border from invasion."[1]

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[1] "Iowa Northern Border Brigade," by W. H. Ingham, *Annals of Iowa*, October, 1902, p. 511.

CHAPTER X

A Decade of Growth—1863-1872

During the Civil War, while the attention of the whole nation was centered upon the great question involved in the internecine conflict, there was practically no movement toward western settlement. Conditions were too unsettled and the young men of the country who were in the army had little time to think about going west. Hardly had peace been declared before the people of the eastern and central states began to follow Horace Greeley's advice to go west and grow up with the new country. From 1864 on, settlers began to flock in great numbers into Iowa.

The Homestead Law, approved by President Lincoln May 20, 1862, was another incentive to settlement after the war. By this law the land was given to the settler by the government at a nominal price in consideration of settlement and cultivation. Later enactments made special concessions to soldiers of the Civil War. Most of the homesteaders went to Fort Dodge to make their proof, but the extreme western tier of townships in Palo Alto County belonged to the Sioux City land office.

Another fact of importance is that with the coming of the homesteaders after the war the building out on the prairie began. Before this the settlement had been along the lakes and rivers where timber was plenty. The early settlers had thus abundant material from which to build their houses which were always made of logs. As the desirable timbered locations were soon all taken up, the homesteaders were compelled to locate out on the open prairie and build homes of sod, thatched with hay, and

covered again with sod. To the early settlers it seemed foolhardy to build out on the unprotected prairie without shelter from the hot sun, the fierce winds and the terrible prairie fires. But these hardy settlers had come west to build a home and make a farm, and the broad and fertile plains offered the finest opportunity for the farmer settler. Groves were soon planted around the little homes and before long the growing trees formed a windbreak and furnished needed firewood. In a few years these beautiful groves dotted the landscape, giving a finer appearance to the county and adding real value to the land.

During the early part of the war practically no settlers came into Palo Alto County. The whole population in 1863 was only 142 people. In the next two years the number had increased to 216. From then on an ever-increasing tide of settlement flowed into the county until in 1870 the census showed a population of 1,336, and in 1873 the number was about 2,000, although no census figures were taken that year. From 142 to 2,000 represents a remarkable growth for a single county in a single decade. It is the history of this period of growth that is now to be considered in detail.

In 1863, on the last day of July, Geo. J. Jacobs and family of five children came to West Bend and settled three and a half miles west of where the town of West Bend now is. Mr. William Carter was postmaster then, the postoffice being located in his cabin and was known as "West Bend." H. H. Jacobs, then a lad ten years old, in telling their experiences says: "We burned out the first fall we were here, '63. After we got our hay all up and the sheds fixed, father was up helping Campbell put up his hay. It was late in the fall and there was a big prairie fire started down toward Pocahontas, on that side of the river. We could see the smoke coming. The wind blew terribly, and the grass on the river bottom was way up. Mother

was scared, with no one but just us children home. She put me on a horse to go after Father about two miles away. I went after him but before we could get back the fire jumped the Des Moines River and came right up through there. There was a colt in the stable and a pig in the pen. Mother got the colt out but could not get the pig out. The pig was in a rail pen and broke out somehow and did not burn. We burned out slick and clean. Just the house was left. The grass was all tramped off around the house and of course it was a log house with a sod roof and it didn't burn, but the family nearly smothered from the smoke. We were left there without hay or anything. There was a place down on the river that had burned in July and Father and John McCormick, who had a mower (the only one in the county) went down and cut hay. Father and Campbell had to put up all their hay with a scythe. McCormick went down there and cut part of it with a mower. Guess we got 10 or 15 tons of hay. It helped out some that winter and then we had to haul hay from Mulroney's and Tobin's and we let out part of the stock. Let Dawson have one yoke of oxen. Lost horses that winter and lost two or three head of cattle. Did not have feed enough. That was one of the hardest winters here. '63 and '64. Joe Mulroney froze his feet. I helped Bickle to put up hay once after. We saw a fire way off miles away but never thought of it coming. Along in the evening it kept coming. I don't know why he didn't know enough to back fire. About midnight it got there and we had a hard time to get the wagon out with a load on it. Just got it out and that was about all. His sheds and all went, hay and everything. Fort Dodge was the nearest trading point and that was forty miles from West Bend. I made several trips there with oxen. Never had money enough to buy a meal on the road and have ground corn in a coffee mill for my dinner. One spring, the time the

water was so high, Father and two of the neighbors got the seeding done and started to Estherville to mill with what little wheat we had left. There came a freshet and they were gone eight days. Before they got home we were planting corn. The last dinner we had we ground up what little seed corn there was left, in the coffee mill. When we got home Mother had biscuits and that is all the supper we had. The men got home before morning. I broke prairie all one summer with a yoke of oxen. We lived on johnny cake for a month there. The only time we got any wheat bread was when we went home. Father could not stand johnny cake only a little while at a time."[1]

In 1864 the Kirby family, Michael, Henry, Thomas, William, and Lizzie, came and settled near the Tobin-Mulroney settlement at Soda Bar. Jas. P. White was another settler about this time who soon exerted an important influence in the county. He was elected county treasurer in 1865 and held the office three times.

After the war several new settlers came into West Bend township. Among them were C. G. Groves, John DeWitt, Jas. Johnson, Ira D. Stone, Joseph Knapp, John P. Bickle, Dan Ditch, Jeremiah Kelley, and a man named Herrick. About the same time Galbraith, B. Franklin, Dr. Underwood, Goldtrap, and H. L. Joiner located on the west side of the river.

On the east of West Bend in 1865 the Dorweiler family settled in what is now Garfield township, Kossuth County, there being no settlers nearer than seven or eight miles.

John M. Hefley, who had been one of the pioneer settlers of Fort Dodge and a valiant soldier in both the Mexican and Civil Wars, brought his family to Palo Alto County in 1865.

Among the other settlers of that year were Robt.

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[1] Interview with H. H. Jacobs.

Carney, Sr., John, W. T., and Robert Carney, Jr., Dennis Carroll and wife and son Patrick, James F. Nolan and Lawrence Burns.

John Doran came to Palo Alto County in 1865 and settled in Great Oak township. Only four families were living there then, Jas. P. White, Michael Kirby, Robert Carney and Lawrence Burns. There were no other settlers on the west as far as the Little Sioux River.[1]

Mr. Doran, telling about the early settlers' experiences in the county, says: "Sometimes the winters were very severe. The winter of '66-7 was the longest, coldest and hardest that I can remember. It set in *very* cold early in December and as there was no snow on the ground until about the first of January, the ground was then frozen about four feet and the ice in the river about three feet. About the first of January it began snowing heavily and drifting and for three months there were two blizzards a week of three days each and all the change was from cold to colder. On the 10th of April there was an average of three feet of hard snow on the ground and more coming. About April 12th it commenced raining hard and heavy and kept at it for about two weeks. On the 15th the river broke up and there was some water on the bottoms about that time."[2] The severity of these winters out on the open plain can hardly be imagined by people of the present day. With no groves or wind breaks, the snow drifting and blowing for miles over the level plains made nearly every snow storm a virtual blizzard, dangerous to any person caught away from habitation and a serious menace to the live stock driven helplessly about in the storm. The severe weather and terrific storms were among the real dangers that the pioneers had to contend with.

In 1866 J. G. Crowder, with his wife and four children,

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[1] Letter of John Doran.

[2] Letter of John Doran.

together with John McCoy, came and settled in Great Oak township, and Patrick Lynch returned to his place.

In June of the same year Orrin Sloan, wife, and two sons, W. S. and David, settled on a homestead on section 34, Fern Valley township. Shippey and the McCormicks were the only other settlers in that township and the West Bend settlers were the nearest neighbors on the south and a man by the name of Hatch over in Kossuth County was the nearest settler on the northeast. To the northwest was Bill Crooks's claim and then Neary's on the way to the old town of Emmetsburg.

Other settlers in 1866 were Michael Martin, his wife, three sons, Jerry, John and Tom, and six daughters, the Moncrief family, Henry Grace and W. H. Grace, William, Robert and Thomas Shea, T. J. Lyon and wife, Andrew Lynch, D. H. Halstead, T. C. Wilson, Chas. Nolan, C. S. Warren, Chas. Hastings, Isaac Stewart, Levi Ashley, James Brennan, Wm. E. Cullen, Thomas Walsh, Thomas Laughlin, Myles Ryan, and Patrick Neary.

When Mr. Stockdale was building the old court house at Paoli he brought up from Border Plain, near Fort Dodge, a steam saw-mill and used it to saw lumber to use in the construction of the court house and school house. The settlers used to get most of their lumber there. During the war the old saw-mill lay unused and neglected, but some time after the close of the war a man named Martin bought the saw-mill and took it down to Tobin's and Mulroney's and did a lot of sawing for the people of that neighborhood. Later the old mill was taken up to Spirit Lake and afterwards bought by Fort Dodge parties and taken down there.[1] This old mill was of great service to the settlers and many still recall the hardships and difficulties they encountered in getting logs to this mill and hauling back the lumber to their homes.

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[1] M. M. Crowley's statement.

It was some time in the later sixties that the first threshing machine was brought into the county by a man named Peterson. It was one of the old-fashioned horse-power machines, but it was considered a great thing in those days, and it saved a great deal of work and time over the old methods of threshing out with a flail or stamping out the grain with horses.

The old court house at Paoli was another source of trouble during these years. The county judge had in 1859 made a contract with Wm. E. Clark to build a brick court house and school house at Paoli, the then county seat, and this contract had been assigned to John M. Stockdale. The work had been commenced but lagged along and had finally been abandoned with the buildings still unfinished.

At an adjourned meeting of the board of supervisors, held on Monday, the 5th day of January, 1865, the Paoli court house contract came up again. It appearing that John M. Stockdale, who had bought the rights and title of Wm. E. Clark, the original contractor, in the contract and the swamp and overflowed lands, had failed entirely to carry the work to completion within the required time, the damages to the county were fixed by the board at $1,800 and John F. Duncombe was employed by them to bring suit against Stockdale and his bondholders. Any moneys collected on the above suit were to go toward completing the aforesaid court house or erecting another as the board might direct.[1] Suit was commenced and judgment secured by the county against the contractor. A special meeting of the board of supervisors was held at the office of the county clerk on the 14th day of August, 1866 (James H. Underwood, Joseph T. Mulroney, and John Nolan, supervisors, and James Hickey, clerk, being present), for the purpose of making a settlement between the county of

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[1] Minutes and Supervisors' Record of Palo Alto County, no. 1, p. 71.

Palo Alto and John M. Stockdale and others about the judgment against said Stockdale and others for $9,750 in favor of said county for damages for the non-completion of the Paoli court house. After due deliberation of the board in regard to said matter, said judgment and all matters and disputes between Stockdale and others and the county of Palo Alto were settled and compromised.[1] The terms of the compromise are set out in full in the legal document printed in Appendix B to this book.[2] Thus ended a long controversy and a rather expensive and unfortunate experience for the county. The supervisors advertised for bids and completed the court house for $1,060.

The court house and school house were poorly located and so bleak and dreary that they could not be used in inclement weather and the county officers preferred to have offices in a more thickly settled region. At a meeting of the board in June, 1866, all county officers were ordered to move to the court house at Paoli, but in November of the same year the board recognized the necessity of finding more comfortable quarters on account of "no provision for heating."[3]

Some light is cast on the interior and furnishings of this old Paoli court house in the report of a meeting of the board held on November 10, 1868. At one end was a platform 6x8 feet and 18 inches high. The seating consisted of 12 benches and 24 arm chairs. It was heated by two box stoves. The desks were two in number, of black walnut. The specifications call for "2 desks and cabinets made in the same style as the one now in Jas. P.

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[1] Minutes and Supervisors' Record, Palo Alto County, no. 1, p. 86.

[2] See Appendix B for terms of settlement.

[3] The records of the county are full of adjournments from the cheerless old court house to the more comfortable cabins of the settlers.—Minutes and Supervisors' Record, Palo Alto County, i, pp. 136 and 142.

White's house except they shall be ¼ larger in all dimensions."[1]

The stage that made regular trips was the principal means of communication and transportation. It was the main artery that supplied the life blood to the frontier settlements. H. H. Jacobs, who drove stage for years through the county, says: "I started to stage it in '70 or '71. I ran seven years out of about nine or ten years. Between '71 and '73 ran pretty much all the time. The postoffice at the Tobin place was established when we came here in 1863. Called Soda Bar. Think it was Tom Tobin that was postmaster. Alice Tobin, Tom Kirby's wife, was postmaster all the time I ran stage. Most of the postoffices were established in '70 or '71 or along there, because they were there when I commenced. Joe Mulroney run stage on the west side of the river up to the beginning of the seventies. Man by the name of Fisher run on the east side, Humboldt to Estherville. Was running four or five years. Both carried mail. Two different routes. In '70 and '71 the horses got sick and sometimes I would come horseback with one horse, and at last they all got sick and I had a pair of three year old steers and I made four trips with them. Came up one day and back the next. That was along in the early seventies. Another fellow drove from Humboldt to West Bend with a pair of steers. Hickey's postoffice was established about the same time.

"My stage route was across the river from West Bend to Fiddlers' Green, where Franklins and all those people lived; there was a postoffice there. Then from there to Rolfe, then to near Bradgate, then from there to Rutland, and from there to Humboldt and Dakotah City. I would make a trip on the west side of the river, start Monday for Emmetsburg and go down to Hickey's, across to West

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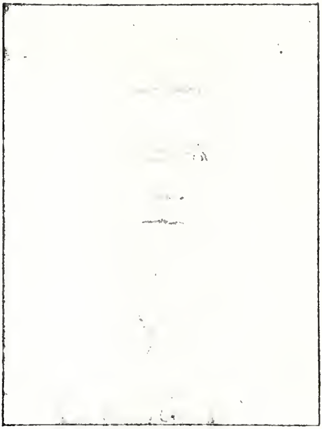
[1] Minutes and Supervisors' Record, Palo Alto County, i, p. 146.

P. F. Van Gorden



E. P. McEvoy

Z. F. Dickinson

S. W. Ballard

Bend to change horses. Cross at West Bend bridge. The bridge was built some time in the seventies. From there down to Rolfe, then the next trip on this side of the river. From Emmetsburg to Fern Valley and then West Bend, McKnight's Point, Wacousta, Tueland, then Humboldt and Dakotah City. That would be in the last part of the seventies. Say from '75 to about '81 that we would run that way. Before that it was just one mail a week.

"I remember when I was staging, Bill Roper, White, and some one else had been to Fort Dodge and a blizzard came, and they got storm bound. They stayed at our house two days. Chas. Ballard was driving stage for me. Think he had made the south trip and I was at home. They wanted me to drive team for them, thinking I knew the road better. We started from home in the morning and got eight miles in the forenoon by working hard. Bill would take butter and put in his coffee, saying that it was as near cream as he could get. We got into Emmetsburg that night, just as it was getting dark. We worked hard all day, shoveling to get through.

"Another time I was driving from Hickey's. Had a little French mare on the stage that day. The roads were full of water, thawed all day. Just before I got to Hickey's there was a cloud came up and it started to snow. While they were changing the mail there at Hickey's it was just one sheet of snow coming down, big flakes. I started for town, had three miles up that bottom and I drove, and if it had not been that that mare would just stick to the track, I would never have reached Emmetsburg. That was the night so many got lost. Lots of farmers started west and had to come back. I could not look up. Could watch down beside the cutter and see that we were in the track. If I had had another mile I know the horses could not have stood it. Their eyes were covered with snow when I got in."[1]

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[1] Interview with H. H. Jacobs.

In the early seventies the principal trading point was at Algona where the railroad ended. J. J. Wilson had a freight line from Algona to Emmetsburg and also one from Algona to Dakotah City in Humboldt County and another line to Estherville. There were no regular roads then and the hauling was done by ox teams which went overland, hauling loads of lumber, hardware, goods, and supplies of all kinds which were in great demand. James A. Keeler, who came to this county in 1871, drove a wagon on this freight line. He kept a dairy and it is an interesting record of the early days. At places where the road was especially bad they would double up and put all the oxen on one wagon, and often had twelve yoke to one wagon to get a load through Cylinder Creek. In June of 1873, the freighters spent several days helping a circus over Cylinder Creek. This was the first show that ever came to the county. John Donovan and Thos. Slater were among those whe freighted from Algona at this time.[1]

The journalistic spirit early made its appearance in Palo Alto County. The first newspaper was the *Democrat*, the first issue of which appeared December 4, 1869. The editor-owner was James P. White and the paper was published at Soda Bar. The prospectus issued by the publisher is printed in full in the Appendix to this book. This paper flourished some time in spite of the difficulty of having the printing done at Estherville, Algona, or other place where they could get the work done. The paper continued staunchly Democratic and when the *Palo Alto Advance* was published by McCarty & Hartshorn and Harrison & Burnell, June, 1870, there were many lively political contests waged in the columns of the two papers. When the copy was prepared the editors of the *Advance* would hitch up and drive to Humboldt or Algona where the paper was printed, wait for the printed copies, and

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[1] Interview with James A. Keeler.

bring them back and distribute them throughout the county. The *Advance* was a Republican paper.

The *Palo Alto Patriot* was published at Emmetsburg in 1873. And the *Monthly Enterprise*, a small paper, was circulated for a short time during the same year. The *Palo Alto Pilot* was started during the last days of the Old Town of Emmetsburg in 1874, and moved with the town. The *Palo Alto Reporter* was started by Henry Jenkins in 1876. Of these early newspaper ventures the *Reporter* alone has survived and is still being published in Emmetsburg. The present *Democrat*, now published in Emmetsburg, was a later paper started in 1884 by P. H. Ryan.

The board of supervisors, at their meeting in January, 1870, for the first time authorized the publication of the proceedings of the board and designated the *Palo Alto Democrat* as the first official newspaper. The following year the *Palo Alto Democrat* and the *Palo Alto Advance* were named as the official newspapers.[1]

In 1870 Pat Connors and J. B. Guerdett brought a threshing machine into the county. This was not the first one, however, but there had been no machine threshing done for several years, and the advent of this threshing machine was hailed with delight by the farmers. The next spring Pat Connors sold his interest to C. T. Allen, who owned the machine until it was worn out. C. H. Giddings worked on this outfit, driving the horse power for five straight years. Mr. Giddings relates some interesting experiences of the days spent with the threshing gang and it is through his kindness that the picture of this outfit at work threshing for Martin Coonan in 1871 is given on another page, Mr. Giddings having the original picture in his possession.

In the early seventies the county officers had difficulty

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[1] Minutes and Supervisors' Record, Palo Alto County, vol i, pp. 175 and 205.

in finding suitable offices. The old court house at Paoli was untenantable and so the county officers were scattered around at whatever places they could find accommodations. The board of supersisors at their January 1, 1872, meeting made the following record: "Ordered by the board that the back room and the east middle room of White & Shea's office be rented by the board for holding court, meetings of the board and county officers for six months from January 1, 1872, paying therefor the sum of fifty dollars cash, and that M. L. Brown, treasurer, has permission to hold his office at the office of McCarty & Hartshorn in Emmetsburg, and Wm. H. H. Booth, auditor, has permission to hold his office at the office of T. W. Harrison in Emmetsburg. M. D. Daniels, sheriff, has permission to hold his office at the office of T. W. Harrison in Emmetsburg. That no office rent shall be paid by the county for the last named officers."[1]

During this period there were several interesting political campaigns. The Democrats were in the majority in the county and had complete control of the offices. In the election of 1870 only the clerk and recorder were to be elected and the Republicans then for the first time perfected their organization and put a ticket in the field. The Republican candidates made such surprising gains that with more confidence in 1871 the Republicans again put up a full ticket and entered upon a vigorous campaign. Geo. B. McCarty describes the issues and the contest as follows: "In 1870 all county officers were Democrats except one or two members of the board of supervisors. The board was at that time composed of a member from each township. In the fall of 1870 the Republicans had formed an organization and put a printed ticket in the field, appointed a central committee, etc., but did not elect any officers. The county had been run very loosely finan-

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[1] Minutes and Supervisors' Record, Palo Alto County, vol. i, p. 234.

cially and otherwise, the county warrants were selling at $.25 on the dollar in 1859 and no buyers. During the spring of 1870 John A. Elliott, land commissioner for the Des Moines Valley Railroad Company, which company had a large grant of land in this county which had become taxable, authorized the writer to buy up from $3,000 to $5,000 in county warrants to be used by the company in paying the county part of its taxes. I bought nearly $3,000 worth of these warrants at $.25 on the dollar, then another party through Jas. P. White commenced buying up warrants and the price advanced to $.30, and finally to $.33 1-3, and a few to $.35, when I, having bought up the required amount, stopped buying and there was no further market for them. Prior to my buying, warrants had been issued by the board at $.25 on the dollar; that is the county would buy a bill of stationery amounting to $25. They would then issue county warrants to the amount of $100 to pay for it. In the spring of 1870 while I was still buying warrants, I went before the board and explained that it was ruinous to issue so many warrants. They said they could do nothing else as they received no money, the county treasurer always turning in warrants for all county taxes. But they finally agreed to issue no warrants for less than $.35 on the dollar, but this did not help the matter materially, as there was a large amount of railroad and other lands unpatented and not taxable, so that the county was each year issuing warrants far in excess of revenue. In 1871 there was a county treasurer, auditor, and other officers to elect, and the Republicans, then fully organized, held a convention and nominated a full ticket at an early date, and the contest at once became spirited. *The Advance*, a Republican paper, was started by E. J. Hartshorn, H. L. Burnell and myself. It was a patent inside and the local pages were printed first at Humboldt and later at Algona in the *Upper Des Moines* office. We would write up our

local and editorial matter, ads., etc., hitch a team and carry it over and have it set up and the papers run off, bring them back and mail to every one in the county. In the meantime James P. White and W. H. Shea started the *Democrat*, which was printed at Fort Dodge. The campaign became very warm. M. L. Brown was the Republican candidate for county treasurer and James P. White the Democratic, and the battle waged hottest in this office, but the others were not neglected. The last five weeks a house to house canvass was made by both sides and not only the candidates but several others participated—on the Republican side, E. J. Hartshorn, T. W. Harrison, H. L. Burnell, J. L. Martin, and myself. While the contest was very spirited, very little or no personal abuse was indulged in and the workers and candidates on the different sides often would meet and recite incidents of the campaign in the most friendly manner. The whole Republican ticket was elected and, as promised during the campaign, they entered upon a policy of retrenchment of the finances of the county. First, they carried a proposition for a mill cash county tax and paid only cash for supplies bought; caused every bill to be paid at 100 cents on the dollar; refused to permit the county treasurer to turn in county warrants in lieu of cash collected on county tax from nonresidents and others paying in cash, but only accepted county warrants when brought to the office by the taxpayer, for the county part of his taxes, and not for the special county tax. This brought the credit of the county up and warrants were worth their face. The old warrants outstanding were bonded and the finances of the county placed on a firm financial basis. While Clay, O'Brien, Lyon, and other counties in Northwest Iowa repudiated their indebtedness, Palo Alto County paid hers dollar for dollar, notwithstanding the fact that most of them had

been issued at $.25 and quite a large amount of them had been issued to hire substitutes during the war."[1]

From that time on the county was close on county elections for many years. Sometimes the Democrats and sometimes the Republicans would prevail and often party success would be divided. These campaigns were generally animated and usually fought along the lines of national issues or individual qualifications. Space forbids any further consideration of this interesting subject. A complete list of all county officers elected in the county will be found in the Appendix.

The tide of homesteaders that flowed into the county continued steadily on the increase. During the years 1869-70-71-72 not only the homesteaders, but also the homeseekers who bought their land, came in great numbers to find locations on Palo Alto County farms. These newcomers, mostly with large families, seemed to settle in clusters, forming a sort of community with opportunities for social intercourse and neighborhood friendships. The day of the isolated settler had passed and the community period was taking its place. For convenience as well as for historical accuracy the remaning part of this decade (from 1868 to 1872 inclusive) will be described by townships.

West Bend township was fairly well settled and most of the new settlers chose locations in the newer and less settled parts of the county. W. G. Henry was one who came to West Bend township in April, 1870, together with his brothers. His brothers, however, returned after the first season and did not come back until 1890. W. G. stayed on his land in section 20 until 1875, when he moved to Emmetsburg, where he still resides. Among the other early settlers in West Bend township in 1868 were E. P. Vance, John F. Little, and Frank Little; in 1869, Geo.

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[1] "Recollections of Early Palo Alto County," Geo. B. McCarty.

Brown, J. E. Stone, and J. C. Fehlhauer; in 1870 W. H. H. Booth and Sam Post; in 1871 Julius Thatcher, Sol Huntley, F. Dudgeon, and S. W. Ballard.

The first settlers in Ellington township were Ezekiel Randall, his wife, six boys and one girl. They settled on section 14, May 14, 1868. That fall James Clemens and John Acker and their families moved in. In the following years, Hud Acker, the Moffit family, Jacob Harriman, M. Wening, John Truog, Sr., Adam Rund, John Krieg, Frank Bursell, Nicholas Steil, Anton Seasnbaumer, Mike Schneider, J. Bart, G. Swessinger, John Rupert, Adam Kress, August Kunz, John Moffit, Wm. Buchacher, E. Goodlaxon, F. Comer, Henry Munch, John Rogers, H. C. Booth, and John Leuer, became residents of the township. In the spring of 1870 Peter Grethen and wife came in company with John Wagner and his wife and two children. As they drove by, a school house was being built for the towsnhip. From that time on a great many settlers located on the fertile plains of Ellington township.

Rush Lake township was a mecca for newcomers in 1869. A. Griley, D. G. Grier, A. J. Scofield, H. C. Obert, X. S. Loomis, Philo Sanford, Ed and H. Sanders, M. Reed, W. H. Cammick, Mike Schuler, Geo. Fries, Linn Loughridge, E. Peterson, Peter Hartley, M. W. Barker, Isaac Perry, and others came that year. The next spring B. Vanderryt, R. T. Barnard, S. W. Tressler, and A. V. Lacy joined them. In 1871 J. P. Stebbins, D. C. Gross, A. Elson, Geo. M. White, Joseph Fish, and O. O. Williams came. Fred Cross and D. M. Wilcox located in the township the next year, and from that time on the settlers came in great numbers.

The first settlers in Silver Lake township were C. A. Hoffman, O. A. Sterner, John Mills, and Joseph Marsh, who moved into the county in the spring of 1869. Patrick Sherlock selected a location in the fall of 1869, and in the

following April his father, Jas. Sherlock, his mother, and three boys, Dan, John and Joe, joined him and together took a homestead on section 12. That year quite a number of prairie schooners moved into the township. E. D. Treat, Hiram Kittlewell, Seymour Morrison, T. D. Collins, John and Dan Collins, J. R. Phoenix, John Hill, Chas. Willis, Wm. Wiley, L. B. Colburn, Ovid Hare, Myron Hare, Peter Olesen, Ole Williamson, G. M. Hamilton, G. L. Dickerman, J. C. Richards, C. L. Harrington, S. Harrington, G. V. Whitman, J. W. Shepard, and Michael Whelan. The next year John Boddy, Robt. C. Owens, and H. A. Webster located there; and the next year H. I. Snow, Rufus A. Hartungs, John Sawyer, and T. W. Lehane, and a large number of others joined the Silver Lake settlement. A postoffice called "Sherlock P. O." was established at Mr. Sherlock's house in 1874 and remained there until Ayrshire was founded in 1882.[1]

In addition to the settlers already mentioned in Fern Valley there were many homesteaders in Fern Valley and Fairfield townships during this period. Dr. A. C. Young and Mrs. Young and son Jerry (J. C.), came to Palo Alto County in 1869 and settled on the northwest quarter of section 6-95-31, the father taking the north half and the son the south half. The father died in '73 and the mother and Jerry sold out in '76, the latter moving to Emmetsburg, the mother returning to Michigan where she still lives.[2] Some of the other settlers in these two townships during the early seventies were the following: J. M. Thompson, Rufus Miller, Kelly Bros., Geo. Pugsley, J. R. Frame, J. P. Davidson, Wesley Davidson, John Schneider, Thos. Cullen, Thos. Richardson, Andrew Satter, Wm. Richardson, Ralph Richardson, John and Steve Hoskins,

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[1] Since the above was written, a continued article, "Some Early History of Silver Lake Township," by an undisclosed author, has appeared in the *Ayrshire Chronicle*, June 9 and 16, 1910.

[2] Statement of J. C. Young.

T. J. Cates, F. E. Walker, W. H. Melon, Simpson La Bar, Fred Falb, Wm. R. Acres, John E. Martin, and Wm. T. Drennen.

With the great tide of settlers that came into the county in 1869, the best lands were early picked out. A few of the best locations in Independence and Fairfield townships were thus selected. Some of the settlers of that year may be mentioned. C. O. Erstad, A. C. Erstad, L. Seely, James B. Elliott, John Jenswold, Fred Wagener, and Henry Hullen. During the next two years a large number found homes there. John Higley, Jacob Mathieson, Julius Mathieson, Peter O. Peterson, Paul T. Hougstein, S. A. Rustabakke, C. P. Yeager, Freeman Woodin, A. P. and Douglas Beck, Geo. L. Clarke, P. C. Forrest, Hans Hansen, Adam Domek, Mat Gappa, Geo. Kleigle, and many others.

Aside from the very early settlers who had selected good river locations, there were not many people in Nevada township. John McCormick, E. J. King, A. L. Sprout, L. N. Sprout, C. N. Sprout, settled there in the early '70s and made their permanent home on the broad prairies.

In Emmetsburg township David and J. H. Millea were with the hardy pioneers of 1868 and settlement was slow there until 1870 when J. J. Kane and 1871 when Myles McNally and their families were the forerunners of the extensive settlement of later years.

In Great Oak township, in addition to those already mentioned, several families came in 1868—Terrence, Robt. and John Walsh, Thomas Egan; and a large number in the next few years, John Wooley, Sam Dyer, James Brennan, Thomas Martin, John S. Martin, John Groff, Milo Gardner, Edward Kelley, Philip Wessar, Theo. Wessar, G. Wessar, B. Quigley, Peter Quigley, Thos. Conlon, Martin McCarty, Geo. H. Beach, and John Jennings. In

October, 1872, Peter Jones, James Keenan, and John Hand with their families, moved in. Peter Jones, in describing the condition of the country at that time, said: "There was high water from within a mile of my house, up to Cullen's corner, when I came here and from the foot of Burns's hill up to Coonan's corner before the town was moved up here and even after it was moved. The wagon boxes would be down in the water and the water up to the horses' sides. One year a man stayed there as guide. He was one of old man Owen's sons. When we would come into the water at Cullen's with the team, he would take care of the team until he put us on the bridge. He was a sort of pilot. That was before they got the grade in."[1]

In 1869 Hiram Millerke built a house on a claim in Freedom township. It was then the only house east of the lake except Michael Jackman's on the east shore. Later John Donovan settled on section 26 and became a prominent figure in the life of the township and of the town of Emmetsburg. In 1870 John and Pat Galleger settled on section 28 and later John Lane, Terence Cullen, Orin and Wm. Ryder, Patrick C. Nolan, John Nolan, Wm. Harrison, Albert Harrison, Amos Letson, Tom Prouty, Chester Prouty, and others came to that neighborhood. T. W. Harrison bought a farm in section 28-96-32, and J. N. Prouty homesteaded an eighty near by, but as his wife objected to living in a sod house, he sold out and moved back to Humboldt.

In the fall of 1869 several homesteaders met at Fort Dodge while selecting land, became acquainted and together came out to Palo Alto County and settled in the northwest part of the county. These were L. C. Christensen, James Olsen, L. P. Duhn, John Nelson, J. J. Skow, P. C. Adamson, and Lars Olsen. The next year they were joined by J. S. Duhn, Thos. Peterson, Nels Jensen, Peter

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[1] Interview with Peter Jones.

Anderson. Later Lars Thoreson and Simon Thoreson came. This was the beginning of the Scandinavian settlement in the north part of the county and from this sturdy stock has come some of our very best citizens, and this community has been a power for good in the affairs of the county.

C. S. Duncan, in the spring of 1871, drove through from Wisconsin to Palo Alto County and located a homestead on the land which is now a part of the north side of Graettinger. After building a shack he sent for his wife and children. They struck Iowa at a very inopportune time, as the grasshoppers took their crop year after year and even the hardest kind of work failed to accomplish much against such a serious handicap. Mr. Duncan, telling of his experiences soon after they arrived in Palo Alto County, says: "I had saved up ten dollars and I hitched up and drove to Fort Dodge, bought potatoes at $.45 a bushel and brought them to Emmetsburg near the river, and peddled them off at $1 about as fast as I could pour them out of a sack. I made three trips."[1] By teaching, as both Mr. and Mrs. Duncan were excellent teachers, they managed to get ahead and after having lived on their homestead a year (Mr. Duncan having served in the army four years, and Mrs. Duncan also having had experience as an army nurse), they proved up, raised $500 on the place and built a very comfortable house. In 1876 he sold his place in Walnut township and bought a place in Ellington township, in the south part of the county, where he lived until he moved to the city of Emmetsburg.[1]

Lost Island township at first contained all that is now Highland and Lost Island, as they were not divided until 1878. John A. Anthony, who settled on the north side of Lost Island Lake, was the first settler in this township. He used to keep a postoffice called Lost Island and it was

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[1] Letter of C. S. Duncan.

headquarters for the stage line from Algona to Spencer. James Freeman, brother-in-law of Anthony, located on the eastern side of Lost Island Lake; Cruikshank and Amos J. Miller settled there soon after. In 1870 McLaughlin came, and in the fall of 1871 the Barringer boys, Emmet, Clayburn and Lyman, located in the township. Dwight Goff also came that year. The Ruthvens homesteaded there in 1870, but went back east and worked on the railroad all summer, coming back to the homestead in the fall and resided here permanently from that on.[1]

In Lost Island township in addition to those already named, James Spaulding and John Cruikshank came in 1869.

Others coming to Lost Island in 1870-71 are as follows: Torry Knutson, P. H. Funkley, Warren Goff, Halver Rierson, W. I. Perry, J. B. Fellows, Anfin Rierson, Severt Johnson, A. Simonson, G. Gunderson, Torkel Larson, and many others too numerous to mention in the brief space at our command.

In Highland township in addition to those already referred to the following became residents in 1870: J. T. Soners, Chas. Harris, John Brennan, Thos. Lee, Martin Doyle, P. Radigan, P. McAlhany, D. Foly, Michael Fleming, John Fleming, James Lynch. In the following year many more came: Alex Ruthven, John Ruthven, Robt. Ruthven, Joseph Damon, James Currans, J. M. Carpenter, James McBride, Lars Bargstrom, Silas Ryder, F. O. Howe. In 1872 Peter Hanson and John W. Hovey cast their lot with the people of this township, and the settlers began to come in great numbers.[1]

Walnut township has already been referred to, but besides the earlier settlers already mentioned, D. M. Leek and the Conway family settled in Walnut township in 1870, and in the following year E. P. McEvoy, a well-known settler, located near the present town site of Os-

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[1] Interviews with Amos Miller, E. P. Barringer, Alex Ruthven, and others.

good. L. M. Cooley, a retired Baptist minister, also came there to live. Thomas Moran, James and Thomas O'Connor, made their home in that township that year. P. F. Van Gorden and family in the same year settled on a farm near the present site of Graettinger.

Vernon township with its fertile lands did not long evade the homeseekers. In 1869 David G. Baker came from Wisconsin and in the early spring settled in Vernon township. He has kept a careful diary throughout his life and the little book that records the daily events of the trip to Palo Alto County and their first experiences there is an interesting and valuable historical record. J. C. Baker was another prominent settler of that township. Other settlers there in 1869 were Chas. C. Gibbs, H. R. Boardman, S. Hammond, and Rev. B. C. Hammond, H. F. Giddings, U. Butler, H. T. Allen. In the following year B. Bradley, C. T. Allen, and L. C. Barnum settled there, and from that time on the settlers came in ever increasing numbers.

Thos. Slater tells his story as follows: "In the year of 1871, the last of March, we moved from Wisconsin to Vernon township and took up a homestead on section 30, five miles north of the present town. After having gone to Algona to purchase lumber to build a house, I began its erection about the seventh of April. It was not a mansion, however, the boards were set up end ways, the roof was shingle and the one-story home was soon ready for its occupants. On the ninth of April my family and I began life anew in this humble hut, on a treeless prairie. The following morning we were welcomed to our new dwelling place by a blinding blizzard that lasted three days. We awoke on the first day of the sweeping storm to find the floor and bed covered with six inches of snow that had made its way through the open cracks between the boards. We had on hand only a half bunch of shingles for fire-

wood, so I was obliged to walk a quarter of a mile to Rev. B. C. Hammond's to get wood to build a fire. At first I lost my way in the raging blast, but finally succeeded in reaching Rev. Hammond's house. Loading myself with all the cordwood I could carry on my back, I started for home. I arrived home about nine o'clock after having been gone an hour. I immediately set about cleaning snow off the floor and made ready to build a fire so that the rest of the family could get up and not perish from cold. At the time of the storm the grain was nearly all sowed and up, and as the snow melted away nature showed forth its beautiful garments. The fields were turning green and bright blades of grass shone in the sunshine. In 1871 I was able to secure work of John Robbins at $1.50 per day, walking five miles morning and evening to and from the Old Town. In 1872 I worked for McKinley, who ran an implement shop or hardware store. For two years I teamed it to Algona for Mr. McKinley. In the winter of 1873 another severe storm swept the prairie, a blizzard lasting the length of three days. During the afternoon of the first day about four o'clock I started to the barn, hoping that I would be able to reach it in safety as my stock was badly in need of attention. Having gone as I thought in the direction of the barn and far enough as I supposed to have reached it, the thought suddenly filled my mind that I had lost my way and I began plodding back in the tracks I had already made in the snow to find myself running against the barn which I had previously been within one foot of without knowing it. I set about feeding the stock, but immediately the question arose, how will I find my way back to the house? I called and my wife came at once to the door and responded. So I asked her to keep up a yell until I reached the house. I resolved, however, to not attempt another trip to the barn until the storm had abated. After the storm the snow

being very deep, I could not reach the river, the accustomed place for procuring my wood. Passing Pat Nolan's on the way to the Old Town, I spied a half cord of rotten wood near the house. I asked Pat what he would take for it. His reply was three dollars. I told him that I thought that pretty steep, but he assured me that it was very cheap at that price. I purchased the wood, however, and on returning home from town loaded it on my sled. Later on I found a job with Nolan hauling hay. I helped him six days and was allowed three dollars for my work, which exactly paid for my half cord of wood. And by this time the wood was burned. For three successive years the grasshoppers took the crops. After having sold the cows and calves to get seed again, I lost all. After the grasshoppers had taken their flight, naught remained but a wife, two children, and a yoke of cattle. And so with my small start I made my way for the Old Town to begin life anew after many hardships. And here I have remained until the present day."[1]

Mrs. Slater writes as follows: "I too shared the hardships of my husband in those early days when there was a constant struggle with poverty. It was not an easy thing for me to see my husband, thinly clad, wend his way across the bleak prairie in search of work. How often, lonely and afraid, I sat by the roadside with my two children awaiting his return, when the weather was such that we could wander out-doors. Sometimes we sat for hours until far across the fields I heard a whistle that made my heart glad, for then I knew that he was returning to his little flock at home. I wanted to do something to help him in his struggle to earn a living, but I could think of only a few ways that a woman with a family could earn a dollar. I asked him to inquire of Mrs. McKinley, for whose husband he was working at the time, if there was any work

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[1] Letter of Thomas Slater.

she could give me to do. She sent me a sack of carpet rags which I sewed and was given a dollar in return. This dollar was not spent for luxuries I assure you, but it was carefully invested in some of the common necessities of life. After the grasshoppers had destroyed our crops and we had taken up our residence in the Old Town, I continued to earn a dollar at every opportunity. I was ambitious and desired to work and save that in later years we might have a comfortable living. I was also anxious for my children's welfare. I was willing to toil if they, through my help, might be able to acquire an education. But I realized that we were poor, very poor, and that only through hard work would we be able to rear our family and keep back the wolf from the door."[1]

"Perhaps it will be interesting to know something of the prices in those times. In 1871 we paid five dollars and fifty cents a hundred for flour and then could only get a few pounds apiece. This being brought by a mail carrier, from Estherville. We paid one dollar per bushel for corn, seventy-five cents per bushel for oats and a dollar and a half a bushel for potatoes. In that year I paid one dollar and half per bushel for potatoes and after they were raised I could only get ten cents a bushel if I were able to sell them. But no one wanted them even at that. We had a larger crop of potatoes that year than we have ever had since. There was also a large crop of other kinds of grain."[2]

The prairies were covered with a luxuriant growth of grass in the early days. The surface water collected in ponds and these tended to produce large and rank growths of grass and vegetation. The grass in turn prevented rapid evaporation, so that the prevalence of tall grass and numerous sloughs was one of the characteristic feat-

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[1] Letter of Mrs. Thomas Slater.

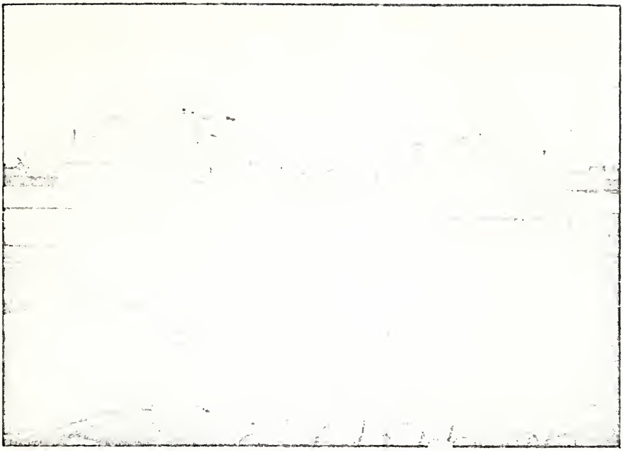
[2] Statement of Thos. Slater.

ures of those periods. These numerous ponds were prolific breeding places for mosquitoes. All the old settlers have vivid remembrances of these pests, and they describe the monstrous size, strenuous singing power, and keen penetration with feelings intensified by years of experience on the frontier plains.

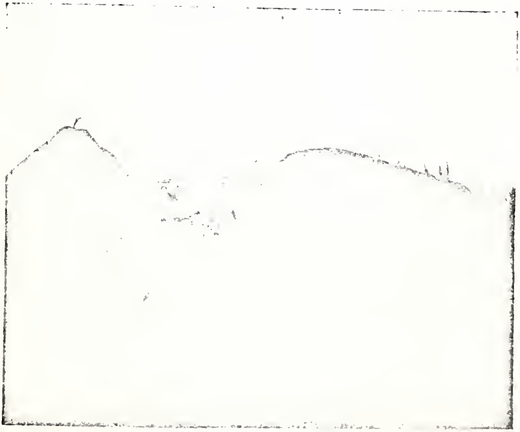
The pleasures of these people were very simple, and their gala days were few and far apart. The youths of those days, now at a ripe old age, recall with smiles the frolics that lightened the long days of heavy toil and privation.

The women of these families were among the bravest and most self-sacrificing in time of need or danger. It is no easy lot to be cast upon the broad prairie of a new country surrounded by the broad expanses of land and sky, with scarcely an object to break the monotony of the prospect. Often the nearest neighbor was miles away, and only at long intervals came the news from the east that was so eagerly awaited. Provisions and fuel were sometimes scarce and the good wives often had to work and save to eke out the scanty living in times of scarcity. Content with little of the material things of life, but possessed of boundless hope and courage, the good women of the pioneer days shared the dangers and hardships of the frontier and thus contributed to the making of history on the western prairies.

This decade from 1863 to 1872 was indeed a period of growth for Palo Alto County. In population, organization and material prosperity, the advance had been substantial. The reverses and hard times of the year 1873 brought this growth to an abrupt stop. During the next few years everything was at a standstill, and this interval was the time of quiet that preceded the next period of development so soon to follow.



THE "OLD TOWN" OF EMMETSBURG



THRESHING FOR MARTIN COONAN IN 1871

CHAPTER XI

The Old Town

The first attempts at building a county-seat were failures because they were purely speculative. They were premature and lacked natural advantages that would compel rapid advancement. The first town in the county was a natural growth. It was unplanned and unheralded, located by force of circumstances, and grew from a natural and spontaneous necessity.

Martin Coonan had built a log cabin in 1858 on the east bank of the Des Moines River on section 23-96-33. This hospitable little home was the stopping place for weary travelers for several years. About 1865, Mr. Coonan hauled brick that was left over when the court house at Paoli was rebuilt and built a new brick house about 16 x 24, two stories high. He used his old cabin as an addition or lean-to. This pretentious dwelling at once became the "tavern" of the county and many a wayfarer found shelter and good cheer within its walls. A traveler coming to Palo Alto County for the first time in 1869, thus describes his impressions: "The next day we plodded westward and crossed into Palo Alto County and later in the day first beheld Medium Lake at a point north of the Michael Jackman home. When we passed the house the children came out and stood in a row (like an old fashioned spelling class) the largest at the head and ranging down to one just able to stand alone. We came along the east shore and around the foot of the lake (where Call's Addition is now platted) and thence northwesterly. When near where the Scott Ormsby home now stands we came

across three small children herding some cows. We asked them, 'Where is Emmetsburg?' One of them, a girl, replied, 'You are there now, sir.' 'Yes, but where is the town?' 'Right here is where it is.' 'But we don't see any town.' 'Sure, and don't you see that stake there in the grass, and that one there – that's Emmetsburg.' 'But where is the hotel?' 'Oh, it's Coonan's you want. It's over there beyond the hill.' So on over the hill and just as the sun was setting we arrived at Coonan's.''[1]

The name still clung to the stakes of the abandoned town that Hoolihan and his friends had so confidently laid out. But Coonan's ''Hotel'' was the magnet that drew all comers. Mr. Coonan had made quite a road in hauling the brick to his house and with an eye for business, put up a sign some distance out, ''Emmetsburg,'' with a hand pointing toward his home. This deflected travel from the staked-out town of Emmetsburg on the shore of Medium Lake, and from the deserted town of Paoli. Mr. Coonan also secured the postoffice and that added to the prestige. The Coonan place thus became the objective point for all travelers and settlers.

In the fall of 1868 Thomas C. Davis came to the county, bringing with him an old saw-mill outfit. He formed a partnership with E. G. Pond and together they built a brush dam across the Des Moines River a short distance from Coonan's and set up the saw-mill. They began to saw some lumber for the settlers and this new industry was the final step in the locating of the real town, which soon began to straggle along the road leading to the Coonan house.

The next spring ''N. D. Bearss built a small shed 10 x 12, about 6 feet high on one side and 7 feet on the other. This was built by setting some old slabs and poles in the ground and tacking tarred paper on and then banking up on the

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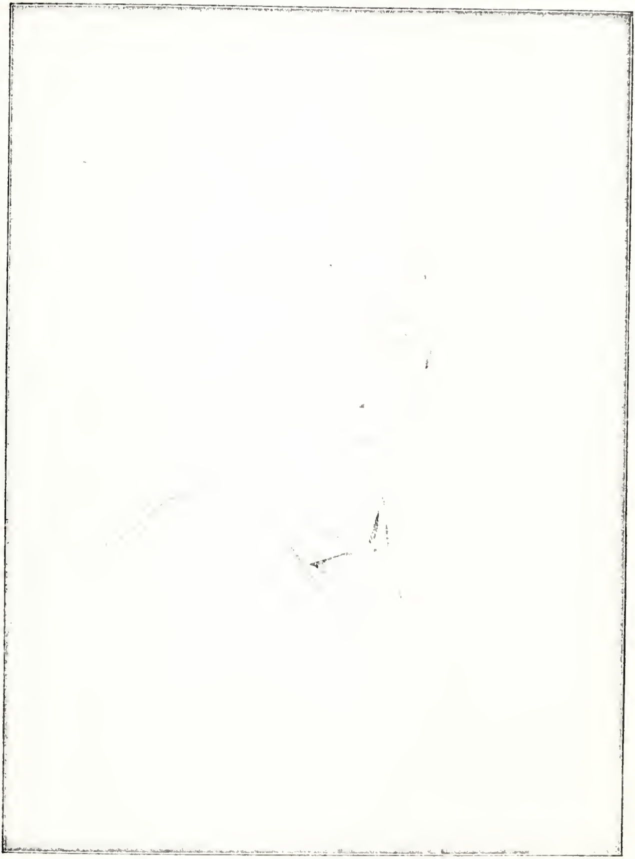
[1] ''Recollections of Early Palo Alto County,'' Geo. B. McCarty.



Geo. B. McCarty

outside with hay. The roof was made with poles and hay. In this 'store' he had about a wheelbarrow full of goods, some pipes and smoking tobacco, etc. He was alone and lived in this shed, boarding himself."[1]

The same summer "M. D. Daniels built a one-story building about 12x14, which I think was made entirely out of native lumber. Daniels and his wife and two children lived in this. He was a blacksmith and had a shop about 10x12 made by standing poles on end and with slabs nailed on them. The roof, what there was of it, was of slabs."[2]

That fall George B. McCarty came out to Palo Alto County to cast his fortunes with the new town. He thus described the journey and his experiences in getting settled:[3] "I had then decided to locate at Emmetsburg, and in October, 1869, having remained until after election to vote and work for my townsman, Samuel Merrill, for governor of Iowa, two days later Al Jones and myself with my few belongings started for Emmetsburg. We went from McGregor via boat to Dubuque and from Dubuque to Fort Dodge via railroad. At Fort Dodge we hired teams, Al Jones having purchased a stock of goods with which to start a store at Emmetsburg, when we should get there. We had three teams loaded with lumber and goods; were three days getting through. Had to unload three or four times and carry the lumber and goods out when the teams would get stuck in sloughs, which was not only hard work, but wet and muddy as well. We arrived at Emmetsburg October 20, 1869, after dark. We put up and covered up

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[1] Statement of Geo. B. McCarty. Chas. Nolan, J. J. Mahan, and other settlers' descriptions agree with the one here given.

[2] Statement of Geo. B. McCarty.

[3] He had previously taken an extended trip through western Iowa with Ben Johnson in 1869, and spent four or five days in Emmetsburg, examining the surrounding country. Al Jones was then stopping at Coonan's. Statement of Geo. B. McCarty.

our goods. The next morning we unloaded the goods and our personal effects on the ground and put some of the lumber over them. Commenced to look for a carpenter and found there were only two in the county — Thos. C. Davis, who was building a small house for Rev. B. C. Hammond on his homestead, the east half of the southwest quarter 30-97-32; and W. H. Caner, who was somewhere in the southeast part of the county putting up a shanty. Jones had a saw and hatchet; I had a hammer and jackknife; and being thus supplied with tools, we commenced a building 16x20 from the lumber we had brought. As we expected to get some native lumber at the saw-mill, we had only brought a small amount of dimension lumber and finding no native lumber, we used the lumber we had for temporary sills and plates and a few rafters. Joists were not needed, because we had no flooring material and mother earth made a good solid floor, as we had found a high spot where it was reasonably solid. By night we had the frame work well up and not having any shingles and a small amount of boards, we had to use them sparingly, but had quite a large roll of building paper which in that case covered a multitude of omissions and quite a pile of goods. That night we had our goods piled up in one corner, yet in the boxes, in fair shape. And the heavens smiled upon us and no rain fell. The second day with what lumber we had and our building paper we had the building well enclosed and roofed in.

" On the third day it rained. The fourth day I started to Fort Dodge with Jo Smith, Culver, and Clark, three homesteaders, who had recently located in the county but had horse teams, for more lumber and materials. It was damp and rainy in the morning, but about eight o'clock, when we were about five miles on our way the wind suddenly turned to the northwest and blew a gale. In less than an hour the mud began to freeze on our wagon wheels

and ice form on the water standing in the grass and sloughs, and I believe I never saw so cold a day. We walked nearly all the time and then nearly froze. We reached Humboldt about nine o'clock that night, and so cold it was that ice formed on the shallow sloughs that would almost bear our horses. They would climb on the ice and it would break in, while the mud would freeze on our wagon till we would have to chop it off with hatchets so that the team could haul the wagons. Next morning we started and reached Fort Dodge at noon, the ice in the sloughs bearing the horses and wagon. Loaded up and next day started on our return trip. The weather was some warmer, but the ice would break and cut through and our wagons would become stalled. For three days we worked, unloaded and carried out our loads and re-loaded often in water and ice far above our knees, and always wet and cold. We finally reached Emmetsburg on the night of the fifth day and then set to shingling the building. Took the tarred paper off the sides and put in studs and joists and finished up the building. This time we brought one door and two windows and 12-inch wide boards to lay across the joists for floor. We also brought some flour, 1 barrel of pork, 1 barrel of molasses and 1 barrel of salt. I remember this fact well from the fact that when we would get stalled those barrels would have to be rolled off and rolled out through the mud and water to dry land and then reloaded, which, when I now well remember that the mud and water were often more than knee deep—well, we had one man in our crowd who was inclined to swear, and it took a great amount of effort on the part of the other three of us to convince him that no amount of swearing could better a job like that.

"Coonan's farm house was of brick 16 x 24, with a small wood addition. The brick part was 12 feet high, giving an attic chamber, one room, and what Mrs. Coonan

called the 'landing,' a small space at the head of the stairs partitioned off by itself. The balance of this attic chamber in one room was commonly known as the 'school section.' This contained four beds, one in each corner, and the balance of the floor space was occupied by the 10 to 30 other male guests and members of the family and when all the floor space, including that under the beds, was fully taken, later guests had to 'sit it out' down stairs.[1] The lower story was divided into a kitchen (very small), a small bed room and a living room, but usually the cooking was done in the living room. The small bed room was occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Coonan, but when women were there Mrs. Coonan sent Martin to the 'section' and the women occupied the bed room.

"I boarded at Coonan's for nearly two months and then Al Jones and I went and slept in the old saw-mill. We could look out and see the stars and during that January and February and March it was cold and we had three or four big snows and blizzards. I remember one February morning when Jones and I awoke the snow had blown in and formed a drift completely covering our bed with more than two feet of snow. We used to take such of our clothes as we took off and our shoes in bed with us. We had a bedstead made of willow poles which was about 1½ feet high, and we nailed a piece of slab on the head and foot and had a big army blanket which we would stretch over these slabs from head to foot and it protected us against the snow, unless it was a regular blizzard, when it would fill up over the bed so that in the morning we could only with difficulty extricate ourselves. But if cold, the air was of a better quality than in the school section and we could get it first hand. This mill building was owned by Thos. C. Davis and E. G. Pond. Davis had par-

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[1] This was, as T. W. Harrison says, "A silent inducement to retire early." Statement of T. W. Harrison.

titioned off a room in one end of the mill building about 12 or 14 feet square. This partition was made by setting poles upright and then nailing other poles and a few pieces of slabs to the upright and then setting another row of poles and filling in between with hay. Davis and his wife and two small children lived in that room and Pond, who was a single man, boarded with Davis. Sometimes when it was too stormy, Al Jones and I would camp in the store building, but it was so small that we could not have a bed there but would roll up in blankets on the floor.

" Aside from the Coonan house and the old mill building already described, there were three other buildings: Bearss, Daniels, and the building built by Jones and myself. During the fall and winter of 1869 and 1870 the regular inhabitants of Emmetsburg were:

"Martin Coonan and wife and five boys, Mart, Will, Dan, Tom and John.

"T. C. Davis and wife and two children.

"E. G. Pond.

"N. D. Bearss.

"M. D. Daniels and wife and two children.

"Al Jones.

"W. H. Shea.

"Geo. B. McCarty.

"James P. White was county treasurer and lived on section 18-95-32, Nevada township. He would come up to town nearly every day and when the weather was too bad to make the drive he would stay over night. In addition to these there were a number of other parties who stayed a few weeks: M. E. Griffin, now a banker at Spencer; G. R. Badgrow, now postmaster at Sioux City; Wm. Starr of Monticello, Iowa, and others. While there was scarcely a day or night that there were not travelers at Coonan's, I remember one night while I roomed at Coonan's, there were 48 persons there, and all had accommodations, such

as they were. Shelter at least on a stormy January night meant a good deal.''[1]

Mother Coonan was noted for her hospitality. "Bless her dear, big, Irish heart,'' writes T. W. Harrison, who stopped there in those days. "She always had a smile and a kind word and a little joke and a hearty meal for everyone who came along. I boarded there for weeks afterwards, and such hearty meals and heartily relished by everyone; a milk pan full of hard fried eggs, boiled potatoes, elegant white bread, good butter, strong coffee with sugar and cream, and dried apple sauce, was the bill of fare three times a day and seven days in a week, and no one wanted anything more or different.''[2]

In February, 1870, T. W. Harrison first came to the frontier town of Emmetsburg. "For several days,'' he says, "I borrowed Jim White's saddle horse and rode around the country to see the lay of the land, and in the course of a week I became satisfied that this land, which would grow natural grasses from six to eight feet high on the bottom lands and two to three feet high on the upland prairie, must have a desirable future, and that I was willing to settle here and take my chances on its development. Another inducement was the fact that two valuable railroad land grants crossed each other at or near the location of Emmetsburg, and I reasoned that those two railroads must be built at some time and that there would be a town where they crossed each other. So I an-

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[1] "Recollections of Early Palo Alto County,'' by Geo. B. McCarty. This statement from which quotations are made from time to time, has never been published, but will be found preserved in the Semi-Centennial Record Book.

[2] "Fifty Years Ago in Palo Alto County,'' by T. W. Harrison, *Des Moines Register and Leader*, July 8, 1906. This statement was originally prepared at my request and was considered of sufficient general interest to have same published at that time. It appeared in several of the Emmetsburg papers in 1906. It will also be found pasted in the Semi-Centennial Record Book, pp. 387-8.

T. W. HARRISON

nounced to the 'Old Settlers' that I had decided to locate here. They asked me what my business was. I said, 'Lawyer and Real Estate.' They said, 'You will starve to death at that trade.' I said, 'I will take my chances with the rest of you,' and they laughed heartily."[1]

Mr. McCarty, during the winter, had a table and a few books in one corner of the Jones & Johnson store building which he had helped to build, and that was his law office. In March he had lumber hauled from Fort Dodge, and built an office building 14 x 16. This was the first office building in the old town.[2]

Among the new arrivals that spring were H. L. Burnell and wife, and E. J. Hartshorn. Harrison formed a partnership with Burnell and they put up a small building and used it as an office and residence. McCarty and Hartshorn formed a partnership in the law and land business about the same time. James P. White and W. H. Shea also put up an office building. Later M. L. Brown and his brother, P. S. Brown, came and built a small hardware and agricultural implement building. About this time James Fitzgerald and his wife bought the small Daniels house and opened up their store. Ketchen and Lenhart put up a building for a clothing store. That summer A. D. Gallop built the "Valley House" and the little settlement began to take on the airs of a town.

W. J. Brown and Alex Peddie were among the newcomers in 1871 who cast their destinies with Emmetsburg.

In 1872 F. H. Roper became the landlord of the "Valley

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[1] Statement of T. W. Harrison.

[2] "I paid $50 per M for dimension lumber, and for flooring and siding, etc., about $65 per M. When I got the lumber home, I figured up and found my lumber had cost me, including the expenses of the trip, about $120 per M." Statement of Geo. B. McCarty. This historic old building was moved to the new town and stood (on lot 2, block 51, Corbin & Lawler's plat) just south of McCarty & McCarty's office until it was destroyed by fire in April, 1909.

House " and did a thriving business, clearing $1,000 in the first five months.[1]

James Fitzgerald was a genial but thrifty merchant and his quaint mannerisms furnished amusement for the town. Many are the stories told about " Fitz," as he was popularly known. Three of them are worth recording. In the early days of the town the boys used to buy cigars, etc., at Fitz's little store and he was always willing to give change for a ten dollar bill if the customer made a purchase but " no buy, no change " was an inflexible rule of the store. W. H. Shea, Jas. P. White and Al Jones put up a job on Fitz and began buying cigars, etc., and telling him to "charge them to McCarty." This was done and in the course of a week or so Fitz presented his bill of $7.40 to McCarty for payment, whereupon the account was indignantly repudiated as not of his making. Fitz mourned as for a lost friend over being swindled in this manner, but quietly bided his time and one day White and his two friends came into the store and asked for some cigars in order to get change for a $10 bill. Fitz took the bill and quietly tucked it into his inside pocket and busied himself arranging his goods. When White asked for the change, Fitz coolly answered, " Oh, charge it to McCarty." On another occasion when a customer came in to buy a pocket-book but had no money to pay for it, Fitz sorrowfully put the pocket-book back on the shelf, remarking, " You must think me green to sell you a pocket-book on tick when you've no money to put in it." One day a lady came into his store and wanted to buy a darning needle, for which he charged her five cents and when she complained of the price, Fitz exclaimed, " The freight, the freight, lady. I can't sell it for less, the freight is so high." But everyone liked good old Jimmie Fitzgerald and his " old woman "

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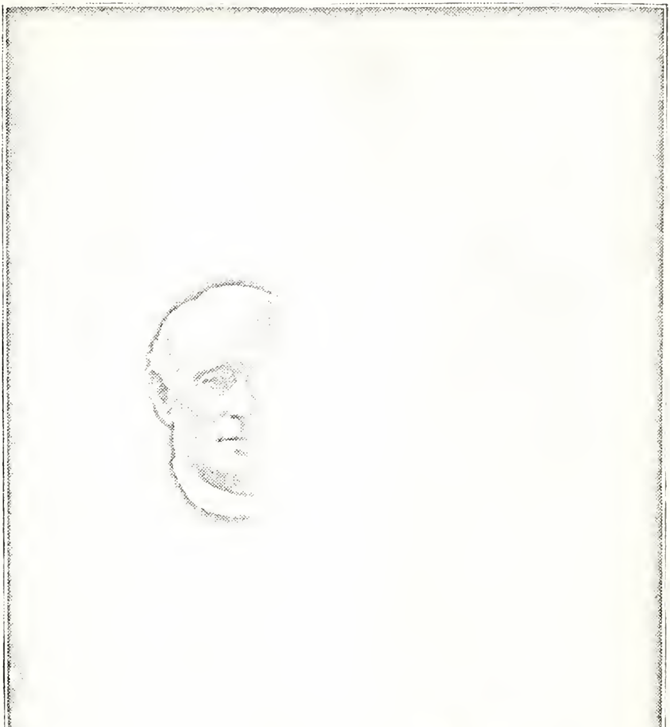
[1] Statement of F. H. Roper.



Rev. J. J. Smith

who together by thrift acquired enough to retire from business cares and live in comfort to a ripe old age.

At this time Fort Dodge was the terminus of the railroad and all lumber and supplies had to be hauled from there. Joe Mulroney was running a small stage from Fort Dodge to Spirit Lake once a week to carry the mail and such passengers as had no other conveyance. The arrival of the weekly mail was an important event and the whole town would turn out to welcome the stage on its arrival. In December of 1870 the McGregor & Missouri River Railway was built as far as Algona and from that time on, there was a daily mail by stage from Algona, and that place became the terminus and the base of supplies for Emmetsburg until the railroad was completed through in 1878.

The Catholic Church was the first church in the old town. It was erected in 1871 through the efforts of Father Linehan of Fort Dodge. Before this the settlers had gathered logs to build a church, but a prairie fire sweeping over the prairie had destroyed all the results of their hard labor.[1] This new church was a large structure for those early days. Father Smith was the first pastor. He arrived at Emmetsburg in December, 1871, when the new church was only partially completed. With fearless energy and boundless faith the young priest began his life work in the new field. He completed the church and organized his parish. There were only thirty-nine Catholic families in the county then, but his sphere of activity was much broader. His parish contained eight counties, but as resident priest he had charge not only of Northwest Iowa, from Hancock to the state line on the west, but also all those counties lying north of Humboldt, Pocahontas, Buena Vista and Plymouth. In addition to his charge in

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[1] Statement by Father Smith, Semi-Centennial Record Book, p. 211.

Iowa, he attended to Southwest Minnesota and Eastern Dakota. In the Iowa territory there are today twenty-seven priests, where the territory was once attended by him alone. Moreover, in the tireless and willing discharge of his duties on the wild and desolate frontier plains, he ministered to the needs of all, and was the kind and cheery friend and adviser of all the settlers, regardless of church or creed. Father Smith is still in active charge of his large and influential church at Emmetsburg, which has grown from the small beginnings so auspiciously started many years ago. No service that he has ever rendered during his long and devoted life has reaped such abundant fruit as those years of untiring devotion to the pioneers on the Iowa prairie.[1]

In the winter of 1871-2 the scattered Protestant families organized a Union Church, John L. Lang being the leading spirit, and Rev. B. C. Hammond, who lived on a homestead five or six miles northeast of town, preached for them. "This Union Church was afterwards duly incorporated and was the forerunner of the present First Congregational Church of Emmetsburg. A Union Sunday School was also organized by Mr. Lang and conducted by him in the spring and summer of 1872. In August, 1872, that Little Giant of Methodism, Col. E. S. Ormsby, located in the old town and it did not take him long to gather together that remnant of the tribe of Israel known as Methodists and organize a Methodist Episcopal Church and

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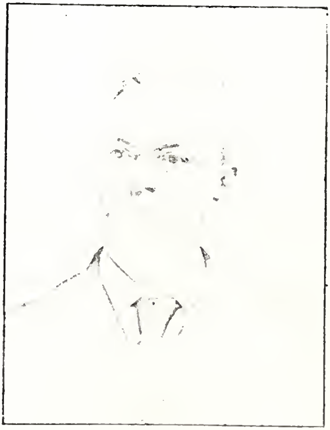
[1] Very Rev. J. J. Smith was ordained a priest in Dublin, Ireland, June 26, 1870. After coming to Dubuque on August 30, 1870, he was assistant priest at the cathedral for three months. He was then appointed pastor at Clermont, Fayette County, from whence he was removed to Emmetsburg in December, 1871. A very excellent comparison of those early days with the present, written by Father Smith, will be found in the Semi-Centennial Record Book, p. 211. See also sketch of his life and work in the *Palo Alto Tribune*.

ALEX. PEDDIE



M. F. KERWICK

Sunday School which have both been flourishing ever since.''[1]

Others began to locate in the town that was already assuming considerable importance as a trading center. There were over 1,000 settlers in the county and Emmetsburg was the only town and trading point this side of Algona and Fort Dodge. T. H. Tobin, Pat Joyce, and John Hall started stores. E. S. Ormsby established the first bank in 1872 under the name of Burnham, Ormsby & Co., capital $10,000. M. F. Kerwick also came in 1872.

The town had grown so naturally along the Coonan road, that no plat had been made at first and the buildings had been located in Coonan's corn field or pasture at the whim of the newcomer, but in the summer of 1870 Mr. Coonan had some blocks and lots surveyed out and later had the plat recorded as "Emmetsburg."[2]

The *Democrat*, published by Jas. P. White, at Soda Bar, and the *Advance*, published by McCarty & Hartshorn and Harrison & Burnell, were the rival papers that flourished throughout the exciting campaign of 1870. But when White lost the treasurership at that election his paper soon after went out of business and the *Advance* sold out to Bates & Hagedon, who discontinued the old name and started the *Palo Alto Patriot* in June, 1873.[3] After a year the *Patriot* sold out to the Palo Alto Printing Company, who dropped the old title and began the *Palo Alto Pilot*. The first issue was June 11, 1874, and was printed in the

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[1] "Fifty Years Ago in Palo Alto County," by T. W. Harrison, *Register and Leader*, July 8, 1906.

[2] May 24, 1871, recorder's office, Palo Alto County.

[3] The most careful search and extended inquiry have failed to find a single copy of either the *Democrat* or *Advance*, and it is believed that time and inattention have destroyed these valuable historical records. One copy of the *Patriot* was once discovered among some old papers at Algona. It was dated June, 1874, and marked in pencil, "the last copy of the *Patriot*," and contained a notice of the dissolution of the firm of Bates & Hagedon, the pubishers. But even this copy is now lost.

Old Town.[1] J. C. Bennett, who worked on this paper, says: "When I first came in contact with it in July, 1873, it was a pretty badly mixed up outfit. It had evidently been stored in someone's barn at some time. The first ink we had to work with was about half straw. The first court calendar printed for use in the county was printed in the *Pilot* office in the early part of the winter of 1873. I have a copy of that somewhere. The *Pilot* office in the Old Town was located in the building that is now occupied by McCrum as a shoe store. It was made of nothing but siding and thin ceiling. The only press was an old worn-out hand press. Had to print the calendar on the old hand press in freezing weather, and it was pretty hard to do anything. . . The *Pilot* was edited by different parties, first by J. L. Martin, then by Rev. J. E. Rowen, who was the Methodist preacher here. A. W. Utter was next editor. I was with it from the fall of 1874 to June, 1876."[2]

In 1871-2 several houses were built on the hill a mile east of the Old Town. T. W. Harrison built his house in the spring of 1871 (the one now occupied by Mr. Appleby), John L. Lang in the fall of 1871, and Captain Hartshorn and E. J. White built theirs in the spring of 1872. "These houses[3] were half way between the Old Town and the location where the new town was expected to be laid out. They were the first houses on the present town site of Emmetsburg as they are now in the northwest part of our present city."

"That (1872) was the summer of brides for the new town. Mrs. T. W. Harrison, Mrs. Emory King. Mrs. Al Jones, Mrs. Ben Johnson, and Mrs. A. L. Ormsby, all came as brides. Some of them were disappointed at not finding

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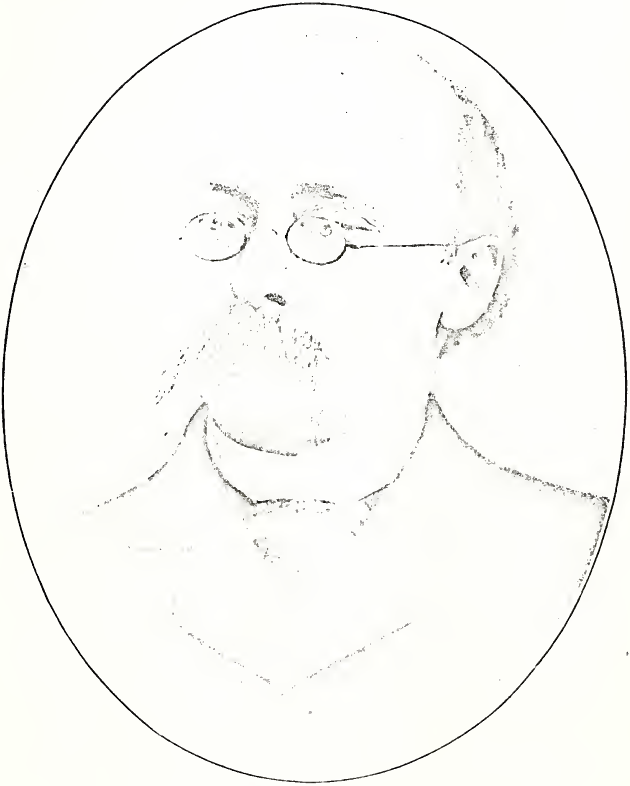
[1] Odd numbers of the *Pilot* have been found, and J. C. Bennett has preserved a file, beginning with no. 20 of vol. i, Oct. 22, 1874, to no. 47 of vol. ii, May 11, 1876.

[2] Statement of J. C. Bennett.

[3] Statement of T. W. Harrison. Letter of Capt. E. J. Hartshorn.

W. J. Brown



M. L. Brown

a larger town in fact, as they had read glowing descriptions of it in the numerous letters from their lovers for a year or more before. But they made a happy addition to the new town society, and were each in turn vigorously, if not delightfully, serenaded by Duncan's Band.''[1]

'' Among the old settlers who lived in the vicinity were 'Paddy in the Bush' (Patrick Nolan, who lived in the woods north of town); 'Paddy on the Flat' (Patrick Nolan, who lived on the river bottom south of town); 'Paddy Green' (Patrick Nolan, who lived on the west shore of Medium Lake); Mrs. Laughlin, the character of the community, who lived south of town, always full of her jokes and witticisms; Dan Kane, who lived in the woods north of town; Mr. and Mrs. Martin Coonan, Sr., who kept the only boarding house in or about the town; John Pendergast, who lived near the lake where Mr. Saunders's mansion now stands; John Nolan, who lived on the west side of the lake; William O'Connell, who lived west of the river; Wm. E. Cullen, William Murphy, and Charles Hastings, who lived south of town; James Hickey, Larry Burns and Pat Lannon, who lived west of the river and south of town; James Nolan, Martin Laughlin, Lott Laughlin, Jerry Crowley, Miles Mahan, Ed Mahan, Billy Jackman, and Patsy Jackman, at Walnut; Mickey Jackman on the east side of the lake; T. H. Tobin, William Shea, Thomas Shea, Robert Shea, Joe Mulroney, Kiren Mulroney, William Mahar, and others at Soda Bar in Nevada township; Michael Kirby, John Doran, Dan Doran, and others, west of the river in Great Oak township; John Neary and Thomas Welch, east of the river, and some others whose names I do not now recall.''[2]

Other people located in the town from time to time, until in 1874 there were forty or more business buildings and

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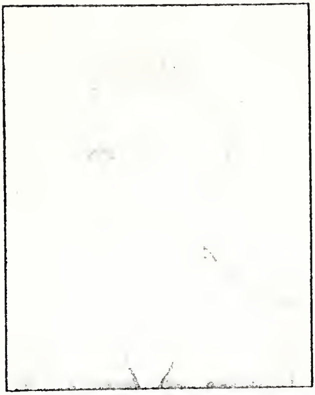
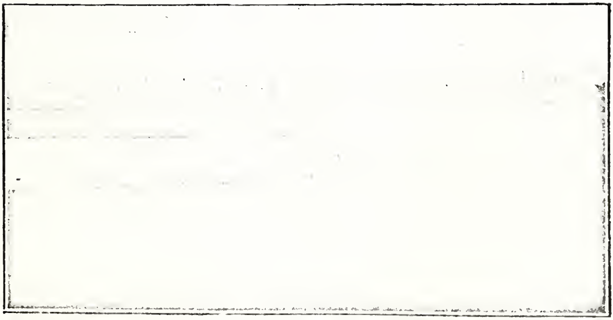
[1] T. W. Harrison's statement.

[2] Statement of T. W. Harrison.

houses. But all the buildings along the Coonan road were small and cheaply constructed, as it was realized that the railroad company would locate a depot on its own ground and that those on the Coonan plat would have to move or there would be two towns within a few miles of each other. It was in the summer of 1874 that the Old Town reached the acme of its existence, for in a few short months it disappeared like the mist before the morning sun and the new and fairer city on the hill took its place in history.



Pat Joyce



The New Town of Emmetsburg in 1878

CHAPTER XII

The New Emmetsburg

With all its sudden growth and outward prosperity, the old town of Emmetsburg on the river was but transitory. The buildings were all rough, temporary structures, or built on posts, as it was expected that the railway would plat a town elsewhere, and that the town would have to be moved some time. Mr. Coonan did not take the trouble to convey lots or plat the town for several years. Moreover, the location which chance had selected was not at all suitable for a permanent town.

This unsettled condition produced a spirit of uneasiness among the people that grew stronger as the railroad company in 1873 began to build from Algona westward. Even when railroad operations suddenly ceased, the dissatisfaction with local conditions grew until in 1874, when the agitation for a change began to take definite form.

Gen. John Lawler of Prairie du Chien, Wis., who was an officer of the railroad company, had bought the northeast quarter of section 25-96-33 for the purpose of a town site and the railroad had been surveyed through that tract. Austin Corbin of New York City owned the northwest quarter of section 30-96-32, adjoining the Lawler quarter on the east, and was anxious to get in on the town site proposition. T. W. Harrison was the attorney for Mr. Lawler and the railroad, and Geo. B. McCarty was the attorney for Mr. Corbin. Mr. McCarty thus describes the negotiations: "Mr. Corbin gave me special authority to act for him and to visit the officers of the railroad company with a view to making arrangements looking to the loca-

tion of a depot and town site. In July I went to Prairie du Chien and saw Gen. John Lawler, who promised to meet me in Milwaukee next day. I then went to Milwaukee and saw S. S. Merrill, general manager, and Alex Mitchell, president of the railroad, and had several hours' session with Lawler, Merrill and Mitchell, and an agreement was then reached that the railroad company was to proceed at once in connection with Austin Corbin and plat the northeast quarter 25-96-33 and the northwest quarter 30-96-32 into a town site and town lots; that the township line between said quarters should be the principal street and that the depot should be located within 200 feet of said line and that a court house square be platted on the highest point east of said line and dedicated to the use of the county for court house purposes, provided the county took steps to locate the county seat there within a reasonable time. That a public park of not to exceed a square of four blocks should be located on the high ground near the northeast corner of the northeast quarter 25-96-33 and dedicated to the use of the town as a public park. That they were to proceed at once to plat out the town site and when so platted that part of the site on the northwest quarter of 30-96-32 should be equally divided between Austin Corbin and John Lawler, that is each alternate lot or block as the agents of the respective parties should agree.

"It was further agreed that before said division was made each person who owned a lot in the Coonan plat with a business or dwelling building thereon and would move his building to the Corbin and Lawler site before December 1, 1874, should have a lot donated to him upon which to locate his building, and other persons who would build and erect a good, substantial, new business building or residence on said plat on or before December 1, 1874, should have a lot donated to them, in consideration of their

moving or erecting buildings. It was provided that no two persons should be located on adjacent lots. There must be at least one intervening lot between. That after locations were made deeds should be made to said parties and remaining lots divided. It was also stipulated on the part of the railroad company that this agreement was to be subject to the approval of Gen. Dodge, chief engineer of the company, and that before said town was so laid out and platted Gen. Dodge should designate on the ground what land was required by the railroad company for right of way and depot grounds and Gen. Dodge should definitely locate the right of way, tracks, and depot site and that when the road was constructed to Emmetsburg the railroad company contracted to erect their depot on said site so selected and make it their permanent depot site. I then went to Madison, Wis., and saw General Dodge and he approved of the agreement and agreed that he would have the plat of depot grounds and site ready within ten days, or as soon as he could take some additional measurements, etc. It was also agreed that I was to act as the agent for Austin Corbin, and T. W. Harrison was to act as agent for the railroad company, and we were to proceed to survey and plat the town as soon as possible."[1]

By this compromise a town site war was avoided, and the original plat was called Corbin & Lawler's Plat of Emmetsburg and is so known to this day. This division also secured for the county-seat the beautiful court house square, and the spacious public park in the west part of town. The Corbin quarter in Freedom township had originally been homesteaded by Thomas Mahar in the early sixties. His cabin stood at the southeast corner of the

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[1] Statement of Geo. B. McCarty. These recollections of early days by Mr. McCarty have never been published, but a copy of them may be found in the Semi-Centennial Record Book.

court house square and only a few years ago a slight depression there plainly marked the place of his cellar. Mr. Mahar abandoned his claim soon after taking it.

While these preliminaries were being arranged, T. W. Harrison was busy preparing for the removal of the Old Town to the new location. Mr. Harrison describes these events as follows: "One morning in June, 1874, when I went to my office, I found a delegation of the business men waiting for me. They said that a meeting of the business men was being held in one of the stores and they wanted me to come over to it. I was then the attorney and agent for the railroad company, and they wanted to know if I thought the railroad company would plat out the railroad town site and give them a lot for each building they would move over if they would move at once, as the risk from fire was too great where they were, and their stocks of goods were getting too large to carry without insurance, and they wanted to get on permanent lots and enlarge their buildings. I told them I thought the company would do that, but that the company would want some guarantee that they would move in case the railroad town site was platted. They told me to draw up any kind of an agreement and bond I desired, and they would sign it. I prepared an agreement and bond with a forfeiture of $500 each in case they did not move as soon as the lots were ready for them, and they all signed it, fifteen of the leading business men of the Old Town. I took the agreement and bond to John Lawler, the vice-president of the railroad company at Prairie du Chien, Wis., and he said, 'Yes, the company will do that,' but that he would have to submit it to the directors in New York City. He said it would take about a week for him to get an answer and for me to return home and hold myself in readiness upon receipt of a tele-

gram from him, to go ahead then and plat the railroad town site."[1]

When at last the telegram was received stating that the negotiations had been approved, Mr. McCarty and Mr. Harrison hired Le Roy Grout to do the surveying and began to plat and lay out the new town.[2]

"The grass was tall, in many places up to our hips, and in some places as high as our heads. Not a tree nor a shrub in sight—just prairie. We got a team and mower and set flags and would mow two swaths through so we could see to set and line up the stakes. When the survey was well along the question of moving came up. In the meantime dissensions had arisen. Coonan had become awake and was offering special inducements for them to stay and others got discouraged at the thought of moving out on the prairie and locating their buildings in the tall grass, without a furrow broken, no roads or paths. In fact it did not look very inviting. About this time some of the dissenters held a meeting and resolved they would not move and about one-half of them agreed to this. Then the question came up and was discussed pro and con for three or four days."[3]

Martin Coonan told them that a hard winter was coming on and that they would freeze and starve out in "Stake-

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[1] T. W. Harrison, "Fifty Years Ago in Palo Alto County," *Register and Leader*, July 8, 1906.

[2] This account of the beginning of the new town is taken mainly from the statements of T. W. Harrison and Geo. B. McCarty, the two principal actors in this drama. As here given it is reënforced by the recollections of M. L. Brown, E. J. Hartshorn, Alex. Peddie, J. C. Bennett, and others. Mr. Harrison's statement, as it appeared in 1906, contained some inaccuracies which he would doubtless have corrected if a later revision had been made after talking with others and refreshing his memory. The account presented in these pages has been carefully verified and is believed to be an accurate history of this interesting period. See early files of the *Pilot* for the life of the new town. See also Appendix D for sample items.

[3] Geo. B. McCarty's statement.

town" as he called it; that they had better stay right where they were and he would give them all the lots they wanted. These were potent arguments, and the business men became exceedingly lukewarm on the subject of moving. I had procured a house moving outfit to come here from Humboldt with their teams and tools, all ready to do the moving. The business men dreaded the trouble and expense of moving. The house movers were clamoring to commence their work, and one day while I was out of town they loaded up my office, moved it out and dropped it on the corner where the Waverly Hotel now stands, and it stood there a lone speck on the prairie for two or three weeks. If it had not been for the bond the business men would have been strongly inclined to remain where they were. But I assured them with great earnestness that the company would collect that bond from every one of them. Finally we got the four leading merchants together in a room, and handed them the plat of the new town and said that we would give them their choice of corners and give each of them two lots on a corner if they would move over at once, and wherever they located would center the business of the town, and be the most valuable property in town. They said that was fair, and that they would do it."[1]

It was on September 2, 1874, that the Harrison office was moved up to the new site and as the first lone building on the prairie, marked the beginning of the prospective town. The second building moved up was the McCarty office building, occupied by McCarty & Hartshorn, which was located on lot 2, block 51, where it stood just south of the present McCarty & McCarty law office until burned in April of 1909. The third building moved was the White & Shea office, which was moved over to the opposite side of

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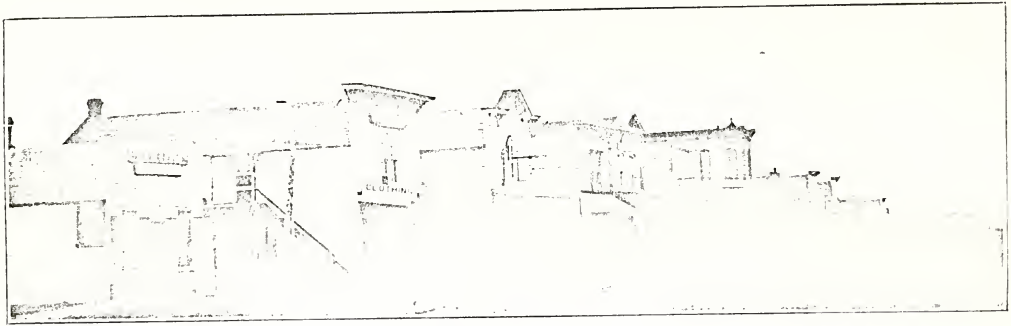
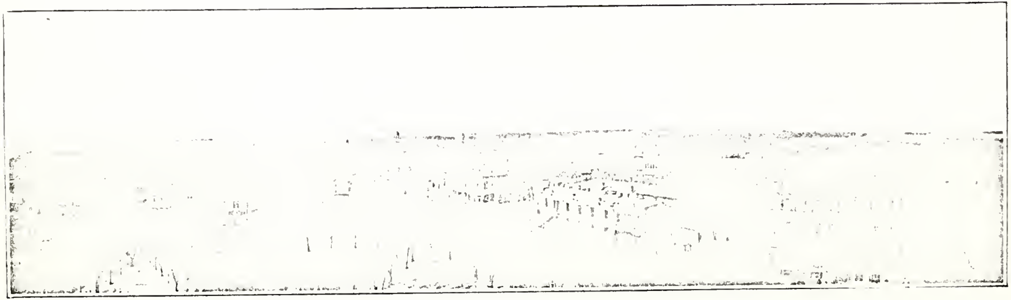
[1] Statement of T. W. Harrison.



Emmetsburg in 1881



The Present Emmetsburg

the street, to lot 1, block 52, where Berger's store is now located. The fourth was Tobin & Co.'s general store.

" Early the next morning," says T. W. Harrison, " the movers loaded the Tobin store building on their trucks, and started for the new town, while all the people looked on and wondered. The building was not large, but it took several days to move it to the new site, and Mr. Tobin was selling goods out of the back door all along the way. He was so well known and so universally liked, and the novelty of the situation gave him such an advertisement that a large crowd of customers followed him to the new town, and his business was larger than it had ever been before, so much so that he said he wished that the other merchants would not move, but leave the new town trade to him and he would be perfectly satisfied."[1] This building was placed on the corner where the Tobin Block is now occupied by the Farmers' Savings Bank. The fifth was the Ketchen & Lenhart clothing store, which was moved to lot 1, block 37, the corner where the Emmetsburg National Bank now stands.

"Then came a halt," says Geo. B. McCarty in describing the events. " No one would make a start. Those who had moved up cut the grass and set out a few hitching posts and were ready for business. Several days were spent in trying to get others to move but without avail. About this time T. C. Davis, who was the postmaster, said that he would put up a building if they would give him a lot. He selected lot 6, block 37, and began his building. In the meantime we had forwarded a petition to Washington to have permission to move the postoffice, but red tape and remonstrance held it up for some time. In the meantime two or three small dwellings had been moved up. Then Ormsbys agreed to have their bank building and E. S. Ormsby's house moved. P. Joyce and Jas. Fitzgerald,

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[1] Statement of T. W. Harrison.

each having a general store, refused to move, and the others joined with them, John D. Hall saying that he would move if the others would agree to. Finally a meeting was held at which there were those who had moved and those favorable, which lasted until near midnight to devise ways and means to break the deadlock. The movers' outfit was idle and on expense and they threatened to leave. It was finally agreed that the parties present would pay the movers when not at work for the next week and appeal to the people of the county. A painter by the name of Walt Duncan was put to work painting boards—'Staketown or bust,' Staketown being the name given to the new town by those opposed, 'On to Staketown,' 'Staketown only station on this line,' 'Staketown will pay more for farm products and sell goods cheaper.' These were nailed on to stakes and set up on all roads, nailed to bridges, etc., and men were sent out and stationed on all roads to appeal to the farmers to stand by us and aid us in having one good town and the county-seat located there without a county-seat war; that the location was a central one and that the railroad would build their depot there under their contract, etc. Whereas on the other hand it would be two small towns within one and one-half miles of each other, always scrapping and fighting, a county-seat war, postoffice fight, etc., which arguments seemed to take well with the farmers (Emmetsburg was the only town in the county at that time, no other trading or business place). Many of them permitted signs to be put on their wagons or chalked, 'Staketown or bust,' and would drive straight through the Old Town to 'Staketown.' It was a winning card and turned the tide of events. The Tobin store had to get extra clerks and one Saturday took in $153 in cash and over $200 worth of farm products. Had to saw 2 x 4 lumber and set them in the ground to hitch teams to. While the Old Town had a

quietude settle over it. Within a week they gave in and even offered a high bonus to be moved first.[1] So that by December 1st, the Old Town had moved up, and the new town loomed up on its hill and could be seen from almost any part of the county, with not a tree or shrub to hide it.''[2]

"Miss Mary McGroarty, sister of Mrs. A. L. Ormsby, was a musician and musical composer, and she wrote a new march which she called 'The March of Emmetsburg,' as she witnessed the flight of the town from the old to the new site.''[3]

The new town of Emmetsburg, after many vicissitudes, had at last become a reality. Later generations owe a debt of gratitude to the wisdom and foresight of the men of 1874 who gave us a central, well located, beautiful county-seat, with ample room for broad growth and advancement as time goes by.

One opportunity, however, appears to have slipped by. Mr. Harrison says: "I had planned at the time to change the name of the new town to 'Merrill,' the name of the general manager and most potent factor in the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad. I had Mr. Merrill in my office in the spring of 1875 and submitted the matter to him, and it pleased him greatly. He said: 'That means spending $20,000 to help make the town grow.' I replied that 'I hoped so.' I discussed that matter with the business men of the town, and some of them objected so vigorously because they said they had advertised Emmetsburg so extensively that it would hurt their business to make any change in the name, that I finally dropped the

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[1] "P. Joyce is waiting anxiously for his store building, which is out running a race with that of Jas. Fitzgerald from the old town to the new. At present Fitz is a few yards ahead.'' *Palo Alto Pilot*, Oct. 22, 1874, vol. i, no. 20.

[2] Statement of Geo. B. McCarty.

[3] Statement of T. W. Harrison.

subject. But if that had been done the city would now have 10,000 or more population. I learned afterward that Mr. Merrill built the Estherville Branch with the idea that the name would be so changed, and it was his plan to complete it through to Fargo, North Dakota, and make this city the division point for that line, with its offices, roundhouse and shops at this place. The original railroad name for this station was 'Sage,' in honor of Russell Sage, who was a stockholder and director in the company, but as Mr. Merrill then had no town named for him in Iowa, it would have pleased him greatly to have this town given his name, and he would have made it one of the most important points on the whole Iowa and Dakota division.''[1]

Yet the citizens were progressive and hard working and the town grew rapidly. Mr. Harrison thus describes the selling of the lots in the new town: "I made up the schedule of prices for selling the lots in the new town, placing the best residence lots at $25 each, and the best business lots at $250 each, and submitted it to the land commissioner of the railroad company. He said, 'Oh, no! you have the prices too high. Put the best business lots at $50 each, and the best residence lots at $25 each. We want that town to grow so as to make business for our road when we build over there.' I said, 'All right, you are the boss, but I would take them all if I had the money, for the best lots will soon be worth $1,000 each.' The lots sold fast, and the town grew rapidly and lots which were then sold for $50 each, are now worth from $3,000 to $4,000 each.''[2]

In the spring of 1875 the first sod was turned for the planting of trees and gardens. The trees around the court house square were planted by the citizens themselves, each planting a tree and caring for it as it grew. Thus early was the practice of planting trees encouraged,

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[1] Statement of T. W. Harrison.

[2] Statement of T. W. Harrison.

E. S. ORMSBY

and to the far-seeing policy thus begun, we owe the chief beauty of our city that is known far and wide as the "Shade Tree City" of Northwestern Iowa.

In this first spring after the Old Town was moved to its new location, E. S. Ormsby who had moved his building to the location where the First National Bank now stands, and controlled the land north of Main street, which is now known as Burnham's addition, broke up a large tract of this and planted it to wheat, and that summer after the wheat was cut people began to build their houses there and it was a very peculiar sight to see the houses dotting the stubble fields.[1]

In the fall of 1875 by almost unanimous vote the county-seat of the county was changed from the mythical "Paoli" to the beautiful square donated and designated on the plat of Emmetsburg as "Court House Square."[2] In 1876 A. L. Ormsby built his brick residence on the hill, the first brick building in new Emmetsburg. The town was incorporated in 1877, M. L. Brown being the first mayor.

Emmetsburg continued to grow and prosper as settlers became more numerous throughout the county. The prospect of the railroad also attracted people, but the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway did not complete its road through to Emmetsburg until August, 1878. The B., C. R. & N. Ry., now the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific, was built to Emmetsburg in 1882. With these two railroads, the town became a city and prosperity smiled upon it.

In 1880 the brick court house was built. It was a large and substantial building for those times and still stands as a worthy public building for a prosperous county. In the same year, T. H. Tobin built the first brick store building in the town. The First National Bank Building and Waverly Hotel were built in 1882. Other substantial

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[1] Statement of J. C. Young.

[2] Minutes and Supervisors' Record, Palo Alto County, vol. i, pp. 413 and 424.

buildings followed[1] until now Emmetsburg with its 3,000 inhabitants, six elegant churches, and its splendid schools, many substantial business buildings, with elegant residences, unsurpassed by any town in Iowa — stands a monument to its founders and builders, as well as the worthy county-seat of the great and prosperous county of Palo Alto.

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[1] Many facts about the later history of the city will be found in the Christmas Souvenir edition of the *Emmetsburg Democrat*, 1895. The files of the *Palo Alto Reporter*, *Emmetsburg Democrat*, and *Palo Alto Tribune*, are replete with contemporaneous history of the city, but full narration of those events would fill another volume and must be left for some future historian.

CHAPTER XIII

The Period of Development — 1873-1910

The year 1873 was one long to be remembered. It ushered in the years of adversity, that tried the stoutest heart. The hard times, the grasshoppers and the wet seasons, together made a combination that threatened bankruptcy for even the most industrious. These years of toil and sorrow are a sad but necessary part of the county's history.

The grasshoppers of the Rocky Mountain region paid a visit to Iowa and adjacent states in 1873-4 and again in 1876-7. It is difficult to describe the ravages of these insects and hard to realize the extent of the suffering that their devastation caused the pioneers. These insects are a species of locust or grasshopper that breeds abundantly every year, by boring holes in the ground and filling these holes with eggs during August, and these eggs hatch out the following spring. Hundreds of these eggs are laid by a single insect and the rate of propagation is enormous. When hatched out the young feed on the tender vegetation near by and when they have eaten everything in sight they migrate in great swarms, devouring grain, garden vegetables, growing crops, young grass, and everything of a like nature. These pests traveled in dense swarms, often several miles wide, obscuring the sun and making a roaring noise like the sound of a waterfall. They traveled mostly in the warm portion of the day, and in the early mornings and cool evenings would gather in loose grass or protected places for shelter and warmth. This fact was made use of by the farmers to destroy the pests,

which were often shoveled up in great quantities from sheltered places, and loose straw and hay were scattered around and then burned when covered with the "hoppers." These grasshoppers often covered twenty miles a day in their flight, leaving in their path a region devastated as though swept by a prairie fire. The old settlers remember vividly the events of these visitations, that were like the "plague of locusts" that visited the Egyptians in the days of Pharoah.[1]

The climatic conditions were such, however, that the grasshoppers could not survive after the second year. In 1876, when they appeared in this county for the second time, a determined fight was made to destroy them as soon as hatched, and protect the growing crops. The county was organized in the spring, the county buying large sheets of tin and barrels of tar, which were distributed throughout the county, and from these "hopper dozers" were constructed. The long sheets of tin were fastened together and bent up at the bottom side and filled with tar. These tins were then put on wheels or carried through the fields, knocking the grasshoppers off the grain and into the tar, from which they were taken in large quantities and burned.[2] The following year the grasshoppers departed unwept and unmourned and have never since appeared in this part of the country.

These repeated ravages of the grasshopper pests were a serious hardship on the early settlers striving to make a living on the Iowa prairie. With crops destroyed, gardens ruined, their incomes thus cut off, real privation and

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[1] "For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they did eat every herb of the land, and all of the fruit of the trees which the hail had left; and there remained not any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field, through all the land of Egypt."—Exodus x:15.

[2] *Palo Alto Reporter*, June 9, 1877. See also March 3, 1877, June 2, 1877.

starvation stared them in the face. Many had to seek other means of employment in order to live and it was only the courageous and determined persistence and hope of the pioneers that brought them through this crisis in our history.

The grasshoppers had so completely devastated the prairies that food and provisions were very scarce. This scarcity was intensified by the terrible money panic of 1873, inaugurated by the disastrous "Black Friday" on Wall Street, which spread its ominous results throughout the country. Money was almost unknown and the settlers had to subsist as best they could on game and what few provisions they could procure. Many of the settlers were in desperate circumstances.

The condition of the people became very deplorable in 1874, especially during the winter months. The extremely wet weather and the ravages of the grasshoppers had left them without crops, and many of them in such destitute circumstances as to be " unable to procure food, clothing, or seed to sow for the coming season." These facts were set out in a resolution adopted by the board of supervisors February 4, 1874, and forwarded to Hon. E. J. Hartshorn, then a member of the general assembly of Iowa, and asking for relief in their time of need.[1] Nothing, however, came of this appeal and the people of the county were compelled to work out their own salvation, which they did with persevering courage and hopefulness.

But these reverses and troubles soon came to an end. After a year or two their effects had been overcome. The splendid courage and determination of the settlers surmounted all obstacles, and the tremendous fertility of the soil soon yielded an abundance that brought a return of prosperity. Adversity was after all short-lived and the

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[1] Minutes, Supervisors' Record, no. 1, p. 347. A copy of the said resolution will be found in full in Appendix C to this history.

final period of development was at last ushered in and the county grew in population and prosperity with a steady and healthful advance. Space allows mention of only a few incidents in this long and eventful period.

The prosperity of the county continued to increase. An article in the *Palo Alto Reporter* October 7, 1876, says: "Lands range from $2 to $10 per acre, wild, and from $8 to $20 improved. . . . Dairying and stock-raising are becoming favorite industries of the county. In 1874 the county exported $30,000 worth of butter and $80,000 worth of cattle. In 1875 $50,000 in butter and $100,000 in fat cattle."

The schools of the county were increasing in number and efficiency. A. L. Day, who was elected county superintendent of schools in 1873, was a man of culture and scholarly attainments. Mr. Day started a private school at Emmetsburg in 1874 and Miss Maria Blair[1] acted as deputy superintendent until the Old Town was moved up to the present site. J. C. Bennett was elected superintendent the following year and served one term.

One of the first Normal Institutes of which there is a record in the newspapers was held in October, 1876. Miss Bassett and J. L. Martin were the instructors. About fifty teachers were enrolled and an instructive program was carried out successfully.

The county schools were indeed becoming an important factor in the development of the county. No one man perhaps exerted more influence upon the schools of the county in an early day than J. L. Martin, who was not only a pioneer settler but a pioneer in school work. He was elected county superintendent in 1869 and as a teacher and instructor for many years thereafter took an active and influential part in perfecting the school system of the county.

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[1] Maria Blair and George B. McCarty were married December 14, 1875.

Along in 1871 some difficulties had arisen over the swamp lands which had been conveyed to Wm. E. Clark in 1860. The board of supervisors finally appointed a committee, consisting of Geo. B. McCarty, Robt. Shea and Wm. E. Cullen, to investigate these swamp titles and they reported that the finances of the county were not in a condition to bear the expense of quieting these titles, but that the board make the best possible terms with the intending purchasers of the interest of the county and that the purchasers quiet the title in their own name and at their own expense, and suggesting that the board call a special election to ascertain the wishes of the people thereon, although this was not absolutely imperative.[1] Again in 1874 a committee composed of W. H. Shea and T. W. Harrison was authorized to investigate the unpatented swamp lands of the county and procure patenting of such lands as soon as possible. And as these tracts were not listed for taxation, being unsettled and their ownership uncertain, in the words of the record "the county was losing large sums annually," and in order to remedy this the board agreed to quit claim all the swamp and overflowed lands, that were duly patented to the county, and not included in the description in the county's deed to Mr. Stockdale. These transactions as to the disposal of the swamp and overflowed lands show how little value was attached to this land at that time. Vast tracts of land were thus practically given away which are now being drained and reclaimed and made the most fertile farming land in the country.

A memorable convention was held at Le Mars in 1874 to nominate a candidate for district attorney for the northwest district of Iowa. That was before the days of the county attorneys, when the prosecuting attorney traveled around the circuit with the judges. Geo. B. McCarty from Palo Alto County, E. B. Soper of Estherville, Lewis,

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[1] Minutes and Supervisors' Record, Palo Alto County, vol. i, p. 212.

from Cherokee, Evans from Harrison County, Judge Robinson of Buena Vista, and Judge Ford of Sioux City, were the candidates before the convention. Emmetsburg sent a delegation of politicians, T. W. Harrison, Capt. E. J. Hartshorn, M. L. Brown, and Charlie Ketchen. After an exciting convention the Emmetsburg candidate succeeded in getting the nomination. The trip home was nearly as exciting as the convention, as the delegates vividly remember hauling their horses out of swamps and deep water and many acts of heroism and daring in getting across the swollen streams that several times threatened to engulf the whole party.

In the fall election Geo. B. McCarty was elected district attorney for the western district of Iowa. The next year he removed to Sioux City, in order to be nearer his work, and remained there until September, 1878, when he resigned the office, returned to Emmetsburg, and permanently resumed the practice of law at the county seat of Palo Alto County.

An agricultural society was organized in Palo Alto County in December, 1876, and January, 1877.[1] After several preliminary conferences the following officers were elected at a meeting at the office of T. W. Harrison, January, 1877:

President—J. C. Baker.
Vice President—Jas. Scott.
Secretary—C. A. Hoffman.
Treasurer—T. W. Harrison.
And one director from each township.[2]

This was the beginning of the society that held annual fairs for so many years and that still owns the grounds south of Emmetsburg.

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[1] *Reporter*, Dec. 16, 1876, vol. ii, no. 27, and Dec. 30, 1876, vol. ii, no. 29, and Jan. 20, 1877, vol. ii, no. 32.

[2] *Reporter*, Jan. 20, 1877, vol. ii, no. 32.

The railroad was so slow in coming that the enterprising citizens of Emmetsburg decided to build a road of their own. "The Des Moines River R. R." was organized with E. S. Ormsby as president and A. W. Utter as secretary, for the purpose of building a road south from Emmetsburg through the county. At a directors' meeting January, 1877, steps were taken to vote a tax and other arrangements made. The newspaper report optimistically concluded as follows: "The meeting was well attended and a commendable amount of enthusiasm and unanimity of feeling manifested."[1] Taxes were voted in one or two townships and voted down in others, and this reverse effectually crippled the enterprise. The building of the Milwaukee the following year and the Burlington a few years later put a damper on home roads, and though this branch was periodically agitated, it never was consummated.

The failure of the railroad to build through to Emmetsburg as expected was a great disappointment to the people. With the terminus of the road only twenty-five miles distant at Algona, it was expected that the new town would soon have railroad facilities. But year after year passed and the railroad company became involved in litigation over "overlapping" grants with other roads and did not comply with the requirement of their grant from the state, that the road be built through to Sheldon by December 1, 1877. The question of forfeiture of the grant became the issue in the Legislature in 1878. Capt. E. J. Hartshorn of Emmetsburg was state senator from this district and was a member of the Committee on Railroads in the Senate. In writing of the situation, he says: "We had a big fight over the old McGregor and Missouri River R. R. land grant. They had only built to Algona and their time was more than up for building through to Sheldon. The B., C. R. & N.'s terminus was then in Grundy County, and

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[1] *Palo Alto Reporter*, Jan. 20, 1877, vol. ii, no. 32.

wanted to build up to Algona, take this grant and build on west from there. They made a tremendous effort in the Legislature, backed by powerful state interests, but generally along the line of the incompleted portion of the McGregor road the people wanted the grant taken from the old construction company and given to the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul road. After an exciting struggle we won out and the road was built from Algona to Pattersonville (now Hull I think) in O'Brien County that season (1878).''[1] It was with great rejoicing that the first train was welcomed at Emmetsburg in 1878 and the town began at once to grow and expand commensurate with its importance as the county-seat of the prosperous county of Palo Alto.

The long heralded railroad from the south finally became a reality in 1881, when the B., C. R. & N. R. R. commenced building their tracks through this county north to Estherville, Spirit Lake, etc. When the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul found that the B., C. R. & N. was about to build from Emmetsburg to Estherville, they became alarmed lest the new road should take a part of the territory which they had intended to occupy and cut them out from a line which they had projected from Emmetsburg northwest via Estherville, Jackson and Crookston, Minnesota, and then north to Winnipeg. This was a pet scheme of S. S. Merrill, the general manager of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul railway. The Burlington, as the old B., C. R. & N. road was called, had no sooner made their survey and begun grading than the Milwaukee rushed contractors, laborers and material to Emmetsburg and began to push the construction of a branch road north. This unusual activity stirred the Burlington and they redoubled their efforts and there began across the northern

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[1] Letter of Capt. E. J. Hartshorn, Washington, D. C. See also the files of the *Reporter* during this time.

part of Palo Alto County a race in construction of railroads that is one of the most memorable in the history of the west. Neck and neck the two roads struggled as far as Osgood, six miles north of Emmetsburg, where the Burlington being slightly in the lead, drew in close to the low line of bluffs north of Osgood, which would have crowded the Milwaukee, which was building parallel with them on the west side, into the foot hills, and thus the Milwaukee suddenly changed their survey and crossed at Osgood to the east, going by way of the town of High Lake (now abandoned), then on to Estherville. Another strategic position was the narrow isthmus between Spirit and East Okoboji Lakes, which is only wide enough for one right of way. Here again the Burlington stole a march by sending A. A. Wells, who lived near Osgood, up there to secure the right of way and when he had contracted for the right of way it effectually shut out the Milwaukee from that route, and they built no further than Estherville, while the Burlington continued on through. The rivalry between the two roads was very keen and as the trains started from Emmetsburg at the same time, and as the roads ran parallel to each other for four or five miles, there was a daily race between the two trains to reach the crossing. The train crews soon imbibed the spirit of bitter rivalry and it was a daily event for the crews to hurl anathemas at each other and fight for the right of way at the crossing. The Milwaukee road ran one of their engines squarely across the crossing and held it there, refusing to let the other road cross their trains until finally the engine was removed by a court injunction. But though the Burlington seemed to get the best of these stirring days of rivalry, this new road was barely able to keep going. One of their engines was attached in Minnesota for a coal bill. Times were hard and business poor. Several of the old settlers remember distinctly that for several years, especially dur-

ing the summer time, the Burlington carried very little freight and it was a common sight for days in succession to see the engine and a caboose go by without a single freight car attached.[1] Trains would wait for passengers and freight and even on the Milwaukee they have been known to leave cars of lumber, household goods, etc., on their main track between stations for the convenience of the consignee in unloading. But although the Milwaukee temporarily had the advantage of the freight and passenger traffic on account of their main line running east and west through Emmetsburg, for which the branch line made a good feeder, yet after the death of Mr. Merrill and when other parties came into control, the branch was neglected, the road bed grew up to weeds, the track poor, the trains more irregular, and often in the winter the trains would be stuck in the snowdrifts for days, or would not run at all for weeks at a time on account of the snow and severe weather. Finally a compromise was effected with the Burlington and the Milwaukee tracks were taken up, the branch abandoned in 1889 or 1890, and nothing now remains except the abandoned grade which may still be seen paralleling the present Rock Island track north to Osgood, the historic evidence of a great struggle in railroad building.

There are many other events that are well worthy of being chronicled, but the limits of this volume prevent their narration at this time. The files of the county papers, which have been preserved, give a regular history from week to week of these later years of development.

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[1] Statements of J. A. Spies, Z. F. Dickinson, C. H. Giddings, and others.

CHAPTER XIV

The Rise of the County Towns

The building of the railroads through the county was an important factor in opening up new regions for settlement and increasing the accessibility of the lands. It is a peculiar fact that all the towns of the county except the old town of Emmetsburg were brought into existence along the line of the railroads. The railroad determined the location and in fact made the towns possible. It was the railroad that gave rise to the numerous small towns throughout the county, and the history of these small towns must of necessity follow the lines of road and their construction.

These towns have been an important factor in the development of the county and their history is an essential link in the historical chain.

RUTHVEN

The town of Ruthven was started the year the Milwaukee railroad was built through the county, 1878. Ruthven Brothers, Robert and Alex, owned the land where the present town site is located and they gave one-half to the railroad company in return for locating the town plat there. The town was accordingly laid out and called Ruthven. While the construction gang was still grading the road, a small shanty was put up and used as a saloon. That sort of business seemed to be the first need of the rough workers, and migrated with them as their work progressed. Thos. Miller was the first resident of the town, as he moved his camp shack to the town site while the road was being graded, and lived there and boarded some of the

men. John McDonald built a small store there shortly after the railroad was completed through and put in a few groceries, overalls, jackets, etc. C. W. Hastings later bought McDonald out. Potter & Scovington were the next to put in a store. The building of the Des Moines & Fort Dodge Railroad through to Ruthven in 1882, and making that the northern terminus of the road gave an added impetus to the growth of the town. Town lots then began to sell rapidly and for the next year or two the town boomed considerably. Stores were built, better houses were erected, and the population grew rapidly. From then on the history of Ruthven is the history of a steadily growing town and it is not only the oldest of the small towns of the county, but it is the largest and has continued to prosper and thrive until now it stands well among the towns of its size in the state.

WEST BEND

The present site of the town of West Bend was first settled by Jeremiah Kelly of Ruthven and a young man named Jones. Mr. Kelly built the first frame house in the township on the east side of the river. A postoffice had been established at the Carter cabin on the south bank of the river where there was a sharp turn to the west. This gave the name West Bend to the township and when the B., C. R. & N. Ry. was built in the fall of 1881 the people of West Bend township voted a five per cent tax on condition that the company would locate a depot in the township. The railroad tried to get the tax and at the same time miss the township, but finally located a station just inside the township line and named it Ives after the president of the road. The people of the township wanted the name West Bend and A. B. Carter met Col. Dows, one of the main officials of the road, at Capt. Soper's office in Emmetsburg and asked him to change the name of the town to West Bend, which he finally consented to do. This

was before there was a single house built on the proposed town site.

The building of the railroad brought with it the shanties of the construction gangs, and a shanty saloon, with a beer keg for a chimney, was hastily constructed east of the right of way. The first permanent building was a companion for the shanty and was built by Jack Gallegar as a saloon in order to accommodate the thirsty toilers on the construction work. This building was located where Mikes Bros.' meat market now stands and was completed in the year 1881, the same time the railroad was completed. James Evans put up a store building (the one now occupied by Geo. G. Schreiber) and bought a stock of groceries. Edward Bagley, in the late fall of '81, moved an old cheese factory from the Banwart settlement in Garfield township, Kossuth County, and set it up for a hardware store on the corner now occupied by Falb's blacksmith shop. James Tilford and his brother built a little store and then H. H. Jacobs gave up the stage-line, built a store and put in a stock of groceries that cost him $855. That was considered quite a stock in those days. The next summer Mr. Jacobs put in dry goods, crockery, shoes, and other general merchandise. His first bill of shoes was $100 and dry goods, $150. He then had the most complete and largest store next to Emmetsburg. His store was only 20x40 and by the latter part of July it was so full of goods that he had to build on an addition. Wm. Amos about that time bought grain and live stock and later, in partnership with Gray as Amos & Gray, added lumber and coal. Later they also put in a store. Then James Johnson moved to town and was the first postmaster, the postoffice being moved in from the Carter cabin. Mr. Johnson built a building which was occupied by Benjamin Franklin as a drug store.

In the spring of 1882 McFarland & McCormick bought out the Evans stock of goods and in the fall McFarland

bought out McCormick and a little later absorbed the Amos store, founding the firm of McFarland & Son, which has since been running and is the pioneer firm of West Bend. Franklin Minger was the first blacksmith, and his son Elmore was the first child born in the town. Elmore is still a resident of West Bend and is head clerk in the McFarland department store. L. E. Hampton had the first clothing store. Mark Gray built the first residence. J. C. Fehlhauer in 1882 built the West Bend House, the first regular hotel of the town, and Dan Kelly was the first landlord.

The first school was conducted in the old Steiner building in 1882 and the first sermon delivered in the town was preached by Rev. Brooks of Livermore.

The first passenger train that came through West Bend on the railroad brought Dr. E. W. Bachman, who stepped off the train at West Bend and located there to practice medicine. Dr. Bachman was later county superintendent, state senator from this district, and still later moved to Estherville where he is now practicing.

The period of 1882-3-4 was one of great activity in West Bend, and the town grew and prospered. It has grown steadily since that time and is now one of the thriving towns of Palo Alto County.

RODMAN

The B., C. R. & N. Ry. was graded and laid through Fern Valley township in 1881. Wm. Thompson had a postoffice at his farm on section 18 which was called Fern Valley. A man by the name of Rodman of Forest City, an old retired sailor, owned some land on the right of way in the township and he offered the railway company a half interest if they would plat a town on his land and call it "Rodman." This was done and the station house was the only building except the temporary boarding shanties for some time. Wm. Thompson moved his postoffice from

his farm into town and changed the name to Rodman. He built a small building for the postoffice and also put in a small stock of goods. He would walk back and forth each day to his store from his farm. Soon after Wm. Sloan bought out this store and became postmaster. Thomas Bates built the first house and boarded the section hands and worked on the railroad. Mart Fritz built a house and E. E. Shriner built a store in 1888. W. D. Fenn built the next house. There were several large hay barns put up about this time and the buying and shipping of hay became the leading business of the town. M. L. Fritz built a hotel and several other stores, blacksmith shop, and other buildings were erected from time to time. After several attempts to have a creamery, the people of the town finally got together, borrowed the money from a bank at Emmetsburg, and the creamery was built in 1895. Later more hay barns and two elevators were built, and several more business ventures came to the little town, which continued to grow until now Rodman is a thriving village, which still has the distinction of being one of the principal hay shipping stations in the county.

OSGOOD

The memorable race between the B., C. R. & N. Ry. and C., M. & St. P. north from Emmetsburg to Spirit Lake, made history very rapidly in 1881. The Burlington, being slightly ahead, ran so close to the bluffs as to force the Milwaukee to cross to the east about six miles north of Emmetsburg. The enterprising farmers in the neghborhood were quick to see the advantage of a railroad crossing and bought part of the Jerry Conway farm and donated it to the Burlington company on condition that they would put a station there. The company built that station and stock yards in 1881. The station was called Blairgowrie after Blairgowrie farm to the eastward, but the people got up a petition to have the town named Osgood

after the town of Osgood in Canada, the home of E. P. McEvoy, who owned the land where the town of Osgood was laid out.

C. H. Giddings built a store there in 1882. He lived on his farm and would walk over to his business for some time after that. Later he built an addition to his store and moved to town. In 1890 the ice house for the creamery was built and the following year the creamery building was erected. It ran just a month when it burned to the ground. It was rebuilt at once. Z. F. Dickinson, who had settled just north of where the town site is now located, came to the county in May, 1878, and was one of the prime movers in the many enterprises of the town. A. A. Wells was another prominent resident of that vicinity.

C. H. Giddings was the first postmaster, as he received his commission in June, 1882. Other buildings, elevators, blacksmith shop, stores, and houses were erected from time to time and the town of Osgood has grown to be a good creamery, trading and shipping point.

GRAETTINGER

A well known physician of Milwaukee owned about 2,000 acres of land in Walnut township where the railroad was surveyed, and he offered the railroad company a half interest in the northwest quarter of section 9, through which the right of way passed, if they would plat a town. The railroad officials, desiring to be in on the ground floor, organized the Cedar Rapids, Iowa Falls & Northwestern Town Lot Co., which took the half interest in the town plat of the town of Graettinger. The railroad went through late in the year 1882. For several years there was nothing to the prospective town but the depot and a house on the hill occupied by August Reichle. In 1885, J. A. Spies and his father came to Graettinger and built a house there, and also put up farm buildings on their

farm in section 5. The town lot company became discouraged about this time and Mr. Spies bought them out. H. N. Oshier was station agent at that time and asked Mr. Goodell, the division superintendent at Estherville, if he could put in a small stock of goods in the depot as they had to go clear to Emmetsburg for their supplies. Mr. Goodell replied that they were about to move the depot to Osgood and that it would not be worth while. This was the first intimation that they had that the enterprising people at Osgood were offering to move the depot down there free of charge. Fortunately for Graettinger the town lot deal was not fully closed and Mr. Spies notified the town lot company that they did not want the lots if the depot was moved. The prospect of this deal slipping through their fingers roused the officials to action, and the order to move the depot was rescinded, and Graettinger was saved by a narrow margin. In 1887 Geo. Zahm built the first store, but in the following year he sold out to H. N. Oshier, who still occupies the same store as the pioneer merchant of the town. Mr. Zahm soon after built another store further up the street, and handled general merchandise there until he later sold out to Preston Fahenstock. This is the same store building that is now occupied by the Wildey store. Several other stores of various kinds were started during the next years. Mr. Zahm and Mr. Spies started the first lumber yard in 1890 and the following year Mr. Spies bought out his partner and built the first elevator. Henry Baum built the hotel the same year. Preston Fahenstock and his father built the creamery in 1892. The second elevator, the present Farmers' elevator, was put up by H. N. Oshier in 1895. In 1886 the people wanted a school on the Graettinger side of the river, and so a rough-board, sloping-shed-roof house was built. There was no floor and at times of rain the roof leaked so that the children had to huddle in one corner to

avoid the dripping water. Miss Anna Mahan (Mrs. Anna Donohue) was the teacher, and rode horseback three miles every morning against the bleak northwest wind, to the school. The next year a floor was added, but no shingles on the roof. The present school house was constructed in 1898. Many other stores, houses and business places of all kinds have been added to Graettinger until at present it is a growing town and has the reputation of shipping more freight over the railroad than any other town of its size in Iowa.

MALLARD

When the Des Moines & Fort Dodge Railway was surveying through the county, Ellington township voted a tax, but Rush Lake did not. Geo. Inman, who owned the eighty on the west side of the township line and in Rush Lake township, gave the railway company a half interest in return for the location of the town site on his land. This took the station out of Ellington and into Rush Lake, but the railway doubtless got the benefit of the tax just the same. Inman had promised the railway company to give them the part of his land east of the tracks, but there was a mortgage on it and the mortgagee took the property and this precipitated a long controversy with the railway which was finally compromised in some way. The track was laid as far north as Mallard in September, 1882. The railway station was the first building on the town plat, though Inman had a small house on his farm and Joseph Mihlfread had lived in a small shack in the neighborhood for several years. The town was named by Chas. E. Whitehead, president of the Des Moines & Fort Dodge Railway, who was a great hunter and used to hunt out through this county for several years before the railway was built. He had a good sense of humor and after naming "Plover," the station to the south, called this new station "Mallard" because of the great quantities of

ducks that inhabited the sloughs and ponds. The railway had hardly been completed before Hackenburg built a store and opened up a stock of general merchandise. He was followed in the same year (1882) by Bill Stafford's general store. John Mertis built the first residence in town. In the spring of 1883 C. H. Sands started a grain, coal, and lumber business and Orie Kendall built a hotel. Mr. Hackenburg was the first postmaster of the town. At first the regular church and Sunday School services were held in the waiting room of the depot, as that was the largest available room. Chas. Ziegler started the first hardware store in the fall of 1883 and several other businesses started and from that time on the growth of the town was rapid and has continued until Mallard is today a prosperous business town.

CURLEW

The town of Curlew was another station established in 1882 on the Des Moines & Fort Dodge Railway. It was named Curlew by President Whitehead of the railway company in honor of the numerous curlew birds found in the neighborhood and in keeping with his policy of naming the towns as an enthusiastic hunter. S. A. Easton built a hotel near the railway right of way, some distance from other towns, and drew trade for some time from the county round about before the company put in a station. Mr. Easton was a genial landlord and his house did a good business. In 1888 Melvin Fisk purchased the hotel from Easton, and later built a livery and feed barn and still later a grain elevator. He soon branched out and sold coal and bought and sold stock. From this beginning the town grew steadily and Mr. Fisk has continued and is today its chief promoter and business man. Cerlew is a lively little town and holds its own among the towns of Palo Alto County in an educational as well as a business way.

AYRSHIRE

The Des Moines & Fort Dodge Railway Company built through to Ayrshire in October, 1882. P. O'Grady was the foreman of the construction gang from Tara to Ruthven and January 1, 1883, dropped off at Ayrshire as station agent, and held that position for eighteen years. Patrick Claer had bought a relinquishment of some land in Silver Lake township in 1873 and moved there with his two boys, Tom and P. J., and one daughter, and lived there until 1882, when he sold eighty acres to the railroad company for a town site. The depot was built in November, 1882. P. H. Owens built the first store that fall and Schoonmaker & Hall built a general store at about the same time. The next summer Geo. Pendelburg opened a hardware store and then built the first residence on the town lots. Ed Brown started a lumber yard and Joel Campbell opened up a coal business. H. Emrich also went into the hay business and sold coal and other supplies. As Mr. O'Grady, the station agent, also bought coal and grain on the side, there was plenty of competition along this line. From this time on Ayrshire grew rapidly and was soon a thriving village that was a great convenience to the surrounding territory, and it has continued to grow until today it stands well to the front among the towns of Palo Alto County.

CYLINDER

Cylinder started with a large hay barn built by Brown & Sons in 1885 and the railroad company then put in a siding in order to enable them to load hay. The Browns also built a house the same year and in 1889 John Geoders built a store. The following year the railroad company built a depot, and the station was named Cylinder after the famous Cylinder Creek that flows near the town site. It is said that the creek got its name from an attempt of some early settlers to cross the stream at high water with an

engine, but the feat was too difficult and the heavy machine sank into the mud and the cylinder became detached and lost in the creek and was never found. This may be only a legend, but it is certain that the stream which has long been known by that name gave the name to the town located not far from its banks. John Geoders was the first postmaster. In 1890 Chas. Terwilliger built another store and the farmers built the creamery. The following year the farmers joined together and put up a blacksmith shop and house for the blacksmith and John Ganzley took charge and worked out the price of the building in work for the stockholders until it was fully paid for. Kelly Bros. put in another store in 1892 and the hotel and livery barn was erected by E. E. Hughes the following year. Others built stores and houses and the town grew rapidly until 1901, when it was incorporated, Geo. Wells being the first mayor and M. N. Oleson the first and only marshal. Cylinder is in the center of a rich and prosperous farming community and is a good trading station and prosperous little town.

CHAPTER XV

Our Modern County

Over fifty years have elapsed since the first permanent foundations were made in Palo Alto County. Many of the pioneers who played a part in the scenes enacted in those early days are still living among us to bear witness to the marvelous changes time has wrought.

From a total of only 216 at the close of the Civil War, the population of the county has increased by leaps and bounds until now we have nearly 15,000 people within its boundaries. This increase in population is typical of the development of the land. From a wild, undeveloped prairie country, with only a few scattered settlers located along the timbered streams, the land has been all taken up and has doubled in value many times until the state census of 1905 shows that Palo Alto County has 1,557 farms containing 312,040 acres, with an actual value of $15,030,201. Land is steadily advancing in price, and by means of scientific drainage and better farming methods, even the onetime waste land is now being made to yield nature's abundance.

In prosperity and material wealth Palo Alto County stands well to the front. There are fifteen banks in the county, all prosperous and steadily growing. The combined capital stock and surplus amount to over $466,000 and the total deposits amount to $2,130,074.93, as shown by the last statements. In volume of trade and business, Palo Alto ranks as one of the live and up-to-date communities of Northwest Iowa.

The 1905 state census shows that during the previous

year Palo Alto County raised 2,185,245 bushels of corn, valued at $625,543; 1,979,540 bushels of oats, valued at $504,006; and produced over 80,000 tons of clover, timothy and wild hay, valued at over $170,000, besides over 30,000 bushels of other crops not listed. The same census shows that Palo Alto County had 35,790 cattle, valued at $625,608; 40,451 swine, valued at $191,161; and 10,609 horses and mules, valued at $628,792; 182,940 fowls, valued at $64,373; 709,380 dozen eggs, valued at $94,658; and dairy products valued at $311,170. All these figures for stock and crops would be largely increased for the subsequent years. Surely this is a splendid record for a county that has only just begun to develop its resources.

In social betterment, Palo Alto takes a high place. A thorough and complete system of rural schools makes a practical education accessible to every country child, while excellent graded, parochial and high schools place the best advantages of a common school education before the ambitious youth of today.

There are twenty-eight flourishing churches in the county, and the large and influential membership speaks well for the Christian influences that are such a strong factor in the highest type of civilization.

In the cities and towns we find substantial business blocks and handsome, convenient houses. The farmers are building better homes, fitted with every convenience, and the life on the farm is becoming every day less of a drudgery and more of a pleasure. Rural mail routes practically cover the whole county, while 612 miles of rural and through telephone lines within the county, together with eight live, up-to-date newspapers, make the dissemination of knowledge and ease of communication an accepted fact. Every town in the county has railroad connections, there being over 74 miles of railroads crossing the county.

Emmetsburg, the county seat of the county, is a modern

city in every respect, having electric lights, modern city water and fire protection, sewerage system, public library, fine modern opera house, good hotels and public buildings, excellent accredited schools, and strong, flourishing churches. Many of the other towns of the county have their own lighting plants and water systems and other conveniences unheard of in a small town a few years ago. Yet with all the progress the town and city debts are low and taxes small. The county itself is in exceptionally good financial condition, as it is out of debt, has only $8,000 bridge bonds, no overdue obligations, and owns property valued at $61,000 that is rapidly appreciating in value.

Surely the seeds sown by the courageous and far-seeing pioneers have borne abundant fruit. Palo Alto County stands today as one of the attractive counties of the great state of Iowa. It offers the advantages of a wholesome, up-to-date community, a place for a home, a place in which to live in happiness and contentment—life in the best and truest sense of the word. Our modern county stands today a worthy monument to the pioneers who with patient industry and wise foresight built such broad and true foundations.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

COUNTY OFFICERS

1858—(First county officers elected at a special election, December 20, 1858). James Hickey, county judge; John Mulroney, treasurer and recorder; John Shea, drainage commissioner; James McCosker, county surveyor; Orrin Sylvester, coroner; Thos. H. Tobin, sheriff; Felix McCosker, clerk.

1859—(Election October 11th.) James Hickey, county judge; John Mulroney, treasurer and recorder; Thomas McCormick, clerk; James McCormick, sheriff; R. F. Carter, coroner; Joseph T. Mulroney, drainage commissioner; John L. Davis, surveyor.

1860—(Election November 6th.) Lott Laughlin, clerk of district court; John Mulroney, treasurer and recorder; James Nolan, surveyor; Martin Coonan, sheriff; John Nolan, justice of the peace; Michael Graham, constable.

1861—Thomas McCormick, county judge; John Pendergast, clerk; J. M. Mulroney, treasurer and recorder; Jeremiah Crowley, drainage commissioner; John McCormick, county superintendent; James Neary, county supervisor; Patrick Lynch, sheriff; John McCormick, coroner; Thos. Campbell, justice of the peace; Thos. Laughlin, constable.[1]

1863—J. M. Mulroney, treasurer and recorder; Thos. Campbell, sheriff; Patrick Mulroney, county judge; Wm. Carter, county superintendent; John McCormick, coroner; Hiram Hall, drainage commissioner; John Nolan, county supervisor Emmetsburg township; Wm. E. Cullen, clerk.

1864—James Hickey, clerk; John Mulroney, recorder; Daniel Ream, superintendent.

1865—Patrick Mulroney, county judge; James P. White, treasurer; Patrick Nolan, sheriff; James P. White, surveyor; James H. Underwood, superintendent and coroner; James Hickey, clerk.

1866—J. H. Underwood, clerk; A. B. Carter, recorder.

1867—Jas. P. White, treasurer; John McCormick, sheriff; D. W. Spaulding, superintendent; John M. Hefley, county judge.

1868—W. D. Powers, recorder; G. S. Anderson, surveyor.

1869—James P White, treasurer; J. M. Hefley, sheriff; J. L. Martin, superintendent; M. Coonan, surveyor.

1870—Wm. E. Cullen, recorder; Robert Shea, clerk.

1871—W. H. H. Booth, auditor; M. L. Brown, treasurer; M. D. Daniels, sheriff; T. W. Harrison, surveyor; John J. Robins, superintendent.

1872—J. L. Martin, recorder; Robert Shea, clerk.

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[1] A contested election between John M. Mulroney and John and James Nolan and Thos. McCormick.

1873—W. H. Shea, auditor; M. L. Brown, treasurer; P. C. Nolan, sheriff; A. L. Day, superintendent; J. L. Lang, surveyor.

1874—J. L. Martin, recorder; T. J. Prouty, clerk. (Geo. B. McCarty was elected district attorney for four years.)

1875—Benjamin Franklin, auditor; M. L. Brown, treasurer; J. E. King, sheriff; J. C. Bennett, superintendent; Le Roy Grout, surveyor.

1876—M. F. Coonan, recorder; T. J. Prouty, clerk.

1877—John J. Robins, auditor; Robert Shea, treasurer; J. E. King, sheriff; A. S. McGrorty, Jr., superintendent; Le Roy Grout, surveyor.

1878—Thomas Walsh, recorder; T. J. Prouty, clerk.

1879—John J. Robins, auditor; Robert Shea, treasurer; Henry Perkins, superintendent; Le Roy Grout, surveyor; T. McDonnell, sheriff.

1880—Thomas Walsh, recorder; Wm. E. Cullen, clerk.

1881—W. H. H. Booth, auditor; Robert Shea, treasurer; H. A. Pike, superintendent; Le Roy Grout, surveyor; T. McDonnell, sheriff.

1882—Thomas Walsh, recorder; D. W. Burlingame, clerk.

1883—W. H. H. Booth, auditor; Robert Shea, treasurer; P. V. Nolan, sheriff; E. W. Bachman, superintendent; Le Roy Grout, surveyor.

1884—Thomas Walsh, recorder; J. E. King, clerk.

1885—W. H. H. Booth, auditor; E. J. Hartshorn, treasurer; H. H. Jacobs, sheriff; B. E. Kelly, superintendent; Le Roy Grout, surveyor.

1886—Wm. G. Henry, recorder; J. E. King, clerk; Thomas O'Connor, county attorney (first county attorney and only Democrat ever elected to the office in Palo Alto County).

1887—P. V. Nolan, auditor; E. J. Hartshorn, treasurer; H. H. Jacobs, sheriff; P. H. Donlon, superintendent; John Moncrief, surveyor.

1888—Lewis Stuehmer, recorder; David Grier, clerk; Thomas O'Connor, attorney.

1889—P. V. Nolan, auditor; E. P. McEvoy, treasurer; H. H. Jacobs, sheriff; P. H. Donlon, superintendent; Le Roy Grout, surveyor.

1890—Lewis Stuehmer, recorder; C. E. Clark, clerk; B. E. Kelly, attorney.

1891—John Moncrief, auditor; E. P. McEvoy, treasurer; H. H. Jacobs, sheriff; P. H. Donlon, superintendent; Le Roy Grout, surveyor.

1892—Lewis Stuehmer, recorder; C. E. Clark, clerk; Thomas O'Connor, attorney.

1893—C. W. Hodgkinson, auditor; A. J. Armstrong, treasurer; John W. Hanson, sheriff; Bessie Larson, superintendent; Le Roy Grout, surveyor.

1894—L. A. Martin, recorder; E. J. Hartshorn, clerk; John Menzies, attorney.

1895—C. W. Hodgkinson, auditor; A. J. Armstrong, treasurer; John W. Hanson, sheriff; Bessie Larson, superintendent; Le Roy Grout, surveyor.

1896—L. A. Martin, recorder; E. J. Hartshorn, clerk; John Menzies, attorney.

1897—P. V. Hand, auditor; J. B. Lamb, treasurer; Wesley Davidson, sheriff; Anna Donovan, superintendent; Le Roy Grout, surveyor.

1898—Geo. Kinnie, recorder; H. M. Helgen, clerk; E. A. Morling, attorney.

1899—J. B. Lamb, treasurer; Wesley Davidson, sheriff; Anna Donovan, superintendent; Le Roy Grout, surveyor.

1900—P. V. Hand, auditor; Geo. Kinnie, recorder; H. M. Helgen, clerk; E. A. Morling, attorney.

1901—S. P. Crisman, treasurer; Alex Cullen, sheriff; Anna Donovan, superintendent; Le Roy Grout, surveyor.

1902—Thos. R. Martin, auditor; F. H. Wells, recorder; D. A. Johnson, clerk; F. C. Davidson, attorney.

1903—S. P. Crisman, treasurer; Wm. Coakley, sheriff; Anna Odland, superintendent; Le Roy Grout, surveyor.

1904—Thos. R. Martin, auditor; F. H. Wells, recorder; D. A. Johnson, clerk; F. C. Davidson, attorney.

1906—Sim R. Stedman, auditor; E. G. Kelley, treasurer; E. M. Carney, clerk; Wm. Coakley, sheriff; Pearle Richardson, recorder; J. E. Williams, attorney; Lille Patton, superintendent; Le Roy Grout, surveyor; J. L. Van Gorden, coroner; B. J. Bergeson, representative.

1908—Sim R. Stedman, auditor; E. G. Kelly, treasurer; E. M. Carney, clerk; Alex Cullen, sheriff; Pearle Richardson, recorder; J. E. Williams, attorney; Lille Patton, superintendent; Guy Campbell, surveyor; J. L. Van Gorden, coroner; F. C. Davidson, representative.

APPENDIX B

ASSIGNMENT OF JUDGMENT AND SETTLEMENT OF PAOLI COURT HOUSE MATTER

The County of Palo Alto vs. John M. Stockdale et al.	In the District Court of the County of Palo Alto.

To the Honorable Board of Supervisors of Palo Alto County, Iowa:—

At the June term of the District Court of Palo Alto Co., in 1866, a judgment was rendered and entered upon the Judgment Docket now in the office of the clerk of the District Court of said County, against John M. Stockdale and others, defendants, in the above entitled cause, and in favor of Palo Alto Co., Plff., for the sum of ($9750.00), Nine Thousand Seven Hundred and Fifty Dollars and cost of suit.

I desire to purchase said judgment from your said County and will pay for the same as follows, to wit:

1st.—I will deed or cause to be deeded to your said county one square of land containing three acres more or less in the town of Paoli in your said county, embracing the ground on which the Court House now stands, for the site of a Court House to be erected.

2nd.—Deed or cause to be deeded to your said county this day one square or tract of land in the town known as Paoli, containing three acres, more or less, for the purpose of a poorhouse site or other purpose of said county.

3rd.—I will erect or cause to be erected in the county seat of said county, upon the land first above named, one court house or public building for said county, according to the plan and conditions of a contract herewith submitted and will execute a bond with approved security for the faithful performance of said contract.

4th.—I will release or cause to be released the county of Palo Alto from all or any claim which I have or may have against the said county for damages on account of land deeded to me by the said county which has been conveyed to other parties by the U. S. Government, provided that I still retain all rights of indemnity which may accrue to me from the state of Iowa, or the U. S.

5th.—I agree to discontinue or cause to be discontinued the application or suit now on file in the office of the clerk of the District Court of your said county in relation to the above judgment, and to pay all costs which may accrue or may have been incurred in the prosecution of said suit or appli-

cation for a new trial in said above cited cause. The acceptance of the above proposition by your Board shall be a final and conclusive contract and agreement without further action on my part. Witness my hand this 14th day of August, A. D. 1866. (Signed) John M. Stockdale.

Resolved by the Board of Supervisors after full conference, investigation and reflection that the interests of the county will be promoted and litigation and expense avoided as well as a substantial benefit realized from a doubtful claim by the sale of the above named judgment of Nine Thousand Seven Hundred and Fifty Dollars, in favor of Palo Alto and against John M. Stockdale and others, and upon the terms and conditions above offered, and we the said Board of Supervisors, do hereby sell, transfer and assign for good and valuable consideration the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, to the said John M. Stockdale, his heirs and assigns, all right, title and interest of said County of Palo Alto in and to the said judgment or any and every part thereof and authorize him or his assignee to collect said judgment and to assume and have the benefit of all right and legal means for the collection of said judgment or any part thereof which could have been resorted to by Palo Alto Co. And the said defendant both principal and securities, to wit, John M. Stockdale, Wm. P. Logan, Wm. N. Meservey, H. Butterworth, and A. Taylor, are hereby released from the payment of said judgment or any part thereof to said Plff., Palo Alto County, and they and each of them the said defendants are hereby authorized and required to pay said judgment to the said John M. Stockdale or his assignee which shall be a full and complete payment, and the Clerk of the District Court of the said County of Palo Alto (he being the clerk of the Board) is hereby authorized and directed to make the following entry upon the Judgment Docket in the above entitled cause and immediately contiguous to said judgment, to-wit:

The above or foregoing judgment is hereby for good and valuable consideration sold, transferred and assigned to John M. Stockdale and to his assigns, August 14th, 1866. See order of Board of Supervisors and sign his name thereto as clerk. Witness our hands this 14th day of August, 1866. (Signed) Joseph T. Mulroney,

John Nolan,

Supervisors.

I hereby certify that James H. Underwood, C. M., was entirely opposed and voted against the proceedings of this meeting.

James Hickey, Clerk.[1]

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[1] Minutes and Supervisors' Record, Palo Alto County, i, pp. 86-88, county auditor's office.

APPENDIX C

The following is a copy of a resolution adopted by the board of supervisors of Palo Alto County and forwarded to Representative E. J. Hartshorn, Wednesday, February 4, 1874:

To the General Assembly of the State of Iowa:—

Your petitioners, the Board of Supervisors of Palo Alto County, Iowa, would respectfully represent to your honorable body that owing to the extremely wet weather and destruction by grasshoppers, a great number of the citizens of this county are in destitute circumstances and are unable to procure food, clothing or seed to sow for the coming season. Your petitioners would further represent that they are without means or authority by law and are wholly unable to provide adequate relief for such a widespread calamity and that unless aid is procured in some manner, the prosperity and well being of this portion of the state will be materially affected and its development greatly retarded. Therefore your petitioners would humbly ask your honorable body to make an appropriation of $5000.00 for the benefit of the destitute in this county, and to make such enactments as shall enable the Board of Supervisors to distribute the same as shall seem just and proper and for the best interests of the county or that you will furnish relief in such other manner or under such other regulations as may seem proper, for the relief of this county, and in furtherance of the future prosperity thereof and to the honor and well being of the whole state. Alexander Gownie, Chmn.

Attest: W. H. H. Booth, Auditor.[1]

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[1] Minutes and Supervisors' Record, Palo Alto County, no. 1, p. 347.

APPENDIX D

Abstract of election returns Palo Alto County election, October 13, 1874: For district attorney, Geo. B. McCarty 308; M. Wakefield 175. For the herd law 320, against 76.[1]

The Election Register no. 1, p. 222, in the office of the auditor of Palo Alto County shows that the proposition of restraining stock carried, the official vote being 335 for and 148 against.

Advertisement by McCarty & Hartshorn, " Iowa Land Office. Several thousand acres of choice land for sale at $2.50 to $5.00 per acre."[2]

Report of Teachers' Institute Friday and Saturday, September 11 and 12, 1874.[3]

" Fitzgerald's store is on wheels and en route to the new town."[4]

" The Lake Shore House is being thoroughly re-fitted and enlarged and will be opened in about ten days."[5]

" Grand Ball at Roper's Hall on the 29th. Free carriages to and from the Valley House."[6]

" P. Joyce is waiting anxiously for his store building, which is out running a race with that of Jas. Fitzgerald from the old town to the new. At present Fitz is a few yards ahead."[7]

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[1] Palo Alto Pilot, vol. i, no. 20, Thursday, October 22, 1874.
[2] Palo Alto Pilot, vol. i, no. 20, Thursday, October 22, 1874.
[3] Palo Alto Pilot, vol. i, no. 20, Thursday, October 22, 1874.
[4] Palo Alto Pilot, vol. i, no. 20, Thursday, October 22, 1874.
[5] Palo Alto Pilot, vol. i, no. 20, Thursday, October 22, 1874.
[6] Palo Alto Pilot, vol. i, no. 20, Thursday, October 22, 1874.
[7] Palo Alto Pilot, vol. i, no. 21, October 29, 1874.

APPENDIX E

''PROSPECTUS OF PALO ALTO DEMOCRAT

''On or before the first of November, 1869, the undersigned will issue at Soda Bar, Palo Alto County, Iowa, an Independent Democratic Newspaper bearing the above title.

''The Democrat will be a faithful and impartial expositor of the natural advantages, resources and progress of the county in which it is published, and an advocate of the social, social political and financial interests of Northwestern Iowa.

''Bound by no clique and controlled by no faction, the Democrat will assume that conservative, yet progressive, stand on the political questions of the day, calculated to redeem our country from the thraldom, oppression and misrule which the unlimited power of the Republican party has wielded in the interests of the few at the expense of the many. In short its watchword will be Retrenchment and Reform, and will labor with unswerving fidelity for the restoration of principles and the inauguration of measures calculated to secure to all classes of our people those rights and privileges which the spirit of our free institutions inspire and national dignity and our common manhood demands.

''JAMES P. WHITE,
''Editor and Publisher.''

Terms of sub. were 2.00 per year
1.00 six mos. [1]

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[1] The original of this Prospectus is owned by Tom White, Whittemore, Iowa.

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